Blaze FM: An Examination of Student Listening Habits and the Uses and Gratifications
Approach of Increasing Student Listenership

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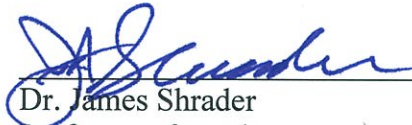
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ABSTRACT

The viability of college radio has been an issue in need of close examination for some time now. With the advent of new forms of technology aimed directly at fulfilling the uses and gratifications of a music-filled world, even commercial radio has seen a decline in listenership. However, with college radio, the problem is more serious. Not usually deemed commercial or mainstream, these stations face even greater problems than a decline in its audience. This exploratory study begins by attaining general knowledge about a group of students pertaining to their listening habits and music preferences, while applying uses and gratifications theory and then attempts to gauge whether or not the station meets student preferences. The narrower focus of this study is to address the severity of the small audience size on the Valdosta State University campus by addressing whether or not there is sufficient awareness of the station itself and, if not, to formulate a plan to suggest what exactly can be done to facilitate change. Of the 251 total participants, 140 live on campus and are within the frequency of the station known as Blaze FM, thus becoming the target audience for this study. A discouraging majority of students were not aware that such a station existed on their own campus. Data was collected and then presented to focus groups in order to seek relevant themes in the material. Such themes can be utilized to aid the college radio station in maintaining and strengthening its audience.

i

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my Grandfather, Mr. Richard Bagley, a man who I hold in the highest regard. I hope this thesis could be a testament to your continual praise, encouragement, and adoration in my life. I love you very much Grandaddy.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

College radio plays an integral role in providing campuses across America with

news, music, and announcements, while acting as a voice that represents the student

body. By reflecting the culture of the campus through a rich diversity of students

participating in the medium, college radio offers unique entertainment when compared to

the alternative of commercial radio (Sauls, 2000). The lack of restrictions placed on

college radio allows the station to be more open with its programming, thus generating

creativity and enabling staff to test new ideas and techniques (Brant, 1981).

As a result of this lack of limitations, the nature of college radio allows for

individual stations to cultivate unique personalities aimed at the collegiate environment

(Sauls, 1995). For a large part of the college audience, college radio is not just something

people listen to; the station embodies the essence of the student and faculty population

(Sauls, 2000). However, its purpose can be two-fold. Brant (1981) said that an important

aspect of a college station is its dedication to both the campus and its surrounding

communities.

College radio programming not only brings independent music to the audience,

but the medium also brings information related to community events, public service

announcements, and general information of particular value to the community including

weather and local news. When the station cares about the community, eventually the

community will begin to care about the station (Brant, 1981). Growing community

support for college radio is important in aiding the growth of the station and ensuring its longevity.

Even commercial radio has faced many adversities since its beginning. Radio's biggest challenges have been the innovative technologies of the time, each new technology drawing listeners away and forcing the medium to adapt in any way possible in order to survive. Surprisingly, from the advent of television through cassette tapes and compact disc players, radio survived even through the early years of the Internet. With threats posed by newer and more innovative technologies such as MP3, or digital audio, players, Internet streaming, and podcasts, radio, particularly college radio, is once again fighting for its life. In a study on the future of college radio, Tremblay (2003) found five dominant challenges faced by the medium:

> (1) decreasing prestige of college radio advising within the college and university communities; (2) decreasing amount of direct institutional financial support for college radio; (3) an inexorable move toward digital production and transmission; (4) a changing composition of students participating in college radio; and (5) a continual reliance on locally produced alternative music and sports programming (Tremblay, 2003, p.184).

The study confirmed that college radio is at a crossroads of sorts and suggested areas for future research. "It faces increased, but not insurmountable, competition for audience; however, the changing student and administrative environment – an increasingly low prestige and poorly funded campus entity – may affect that stability" (Tremblay, 2003, p. 184). Thus the survival of college radio appears to be at the mercy of the institution's priorities and the station's apparent value to the university.

Assistant Professor of Communication at William Paterson University and general

manager of WPSC, the university's campus radio station, Rob Quicke founded College

Radio Day in October 2011 in an effort to bring national attention to the medium. He said

that the primary goal of College Radio Day is to get people to tune into their

local college radio stations to show appreciation for these stations' unique contributions

to the community at large (Troop, 2011). College Radio Day is a testament to how the

medium can be a vital part of on/off campus life for students and community members

identified by Troop (2011), thus reinforcing Brant's (1981) now prophetic statement

pertaining to the survivability of the campus station.

In Vorwald's (2010) article, Chris Carroll, the director of student media at

Vanderbilt Student Communications Inc., shared his concern regarding the number of

students today that are no longer listening to radio. Instead, students are more apt to be

using mobile devices such as smartphones and laptops, both of which are more readily

serviced by online music streaming Web sites such as YouTube (Chen, Hurley &

Karim, 2005, San Bruno, CA) or Pandora (Glaser, Kraft & Westergren, 2000,

Oakland, CA). Spencer's (2011) article from *The New York Times* echoed the insight

seen in Vorwald's article, "Instead, students arrive on campus armed with smartphones,

iPods, and tablets on which they can listen to music services like Pandora, an Internet

station that uses an algorithm to determine what songs to play" (p. 4). Captivating

listeners and maintaining their attention is integral to radio's continued success.

By assessing the prevalence of these forms of new media on campus, one can

better understand the priority, or lack thereof, that students place on radio. In the case of

this thesis, the goal is to formulate a plan to increase listenership – essentially by having students tune into Blaze FM. In order to be successful, one must first ascertain the current listening habits and music preferences of the contemporary college student.

In an attempt to accomplish this goal, a survey will be used to generate an understanding of these habits and preferences in addition to gauging the level of awareness among students surrounding Blaze FM. In order to bolster the understanding between the researcher and the students, focus groups will be utilized to further explore the reasons why students may not be listening, the logic behind the unawareness of Blaze FM, and the resources that the station could tap into in order to offer students a more viable medium on campus. Sampling a large cross-section of students on campus by generating surveys to classes with open enrollment, this study aims to gather as much information as possible from a variety of undergraduate students.

Reese (1996) asserted that college radio stations often have little research material on the audience in gauging its size or the station's programming effectiveness. Keith and Krause (1993) pointed out that "regardless of size, all stations must put forth an effort to acquaint themselves with the characteristics of the audience" (p. 155). Reese (1996) continued with his approach to college radio by obtaining the data from audience research in-house – specifically in the form of a survey. Sauls (2000) added that "it is common for stations to undertake in-house listener surveys … although purely scientific research methods are not always employed, the results do at least provide some type of reading on how the campus views the station" (pp. 89-90).

Sherman (1995) noted, "In-house research is a rapidly growing area of audience analysis" (p. 388). Reese (1996) implored that not only is the ability to conduct in-house

research within the scope of most college stations, but such research is a cost-effective way and one that can be tailored to obtain more than just the mere numbers of listeners. It is always useful to know the number of regular listeners, their demographics, and other information about the audience; therefore, questions that answer this information will generally be included in any survey because college stations will want more information than can simply be found in a ratings book (Reese, 1996). "Survey design can incorporate questions ranging from programming preferences to radio listening habits and everything in between" (Reese, 1996, p. 17).

By applying Katz (1959) uses and gratifications theory, the author has a time-tested method for understanding why people choose to engage in certain forms of media. The results that are generated from this study will offer two contributions. With regard to theory, the data offers empirical knowledge of how uses and gratifications theory influences participants' choices in media. With regards to practicality, the study will provide data that can be used as a tangible evidence of the need for effective change (Rosenkrans, 2009).

Understanding the level of students' awareness of the station is the primary focus of this thesis. Without this understanding, the author cannot achieve the action research goal of increasing the audience. Beginning with a literature review encompassing the history of college radio, uses and gratification theory, new media technology, and a brief history of Blaze FM, this thesis will attempt to answer the author's research questions by collecting and analyzing the data obtained from the surveys and the responses observed during the focus groups. The thesis will ultimately provide insight into the impact, or lack thereof, that Valdosta State University's (VSU) station has today.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review portion of this thesis will provide the reader with a basis of knowledge concerning the history of college radio, including VSU's Blaze FM, as well as background scholarly material on uses and gratifications theory and new media technology. Finally, this section will conclude in the formulation of research questions.

History of College Radio

In the 1960s, disc jockeys at Frequency Modulation (FM) stations around the country responded to the changing radio audience – now mostly college and high school kids (Douglas, 2004). In 1967, New York City's WNEW 102.7 began to play a different format that was more finely tuned to the differing listening habits of the audience. This new format would be called free-form radio, also known as progressive rock or underground (Douglas, 2004).

This was yet another opportunity for FM radio to experiment on the air while adapting to changes in technology and the rise of the counterculture in America. Young peoples' desires to hear more challenging and complex music were being granted (Douglas, 2004). Campus stations across the country pioneered and embraced the underground format with affluent students becoming loyal listeners (Douglas, 2004). College stations were paying attention to the alternative offerings of commercial stations including the disc jockeys' presentation styles and began to emulate them on their college

radio airwaves (Wall, 2007). During these early years of college radio, stations were operated as part of academic departments of electrical engineering and focused mainly on the technical aspects of radio broadcasting rather than the role of a public service (Cox, 2004).

Since the 1960s, college radio has become a haven for students interested in experimental and underground music (Barnard, 2000; McClung, Mims, & Hong, 2003; McClung & Desztich, 2007; Waits, 2008; Wall, 2007; Weinstein, 1995). In the 1980s, the term college rock became popular after college stations continued with the free-form format by playing counter culture music (Wall, 2007). Wall argued that in college radio there is a "sense of an alternative music culture built up out of a series of discursive practices around music, which are then reinforced in the programming and presentation of the music on-air through remnants of the ideas of cultural uplift, progressive politics and counterculture that have pervaded not-for-profit radio in the United States" (Wall, 2007, p. 44)

College radio today, as in the past, focuses primarily on education by serving academic departments generally in the journalism or broadcasting field (Newton, 2004). However, the college station can also serve as a training laboratory for students pursuing careers in associated fields of communication such as marketing and business. By defining itself as an alternative to professional stations, the college station still provides entertainment and information to its audience (Newton, 2004). However, some stations exist only as a student activity in alignment with other campus organizations.

College radio attracts "artists, rebels, misfits, and introverts" and is a "fascinating example of underground culture… often [existing] in philosophical opposition to

commercial, mainstream radio" (Waits, 2008, pp. 83-84). As opposed to the tightly structured and machine-run commercial radio, college radio has maintained its independence in programming. However, Wallace (2008) considered the medium way too often overlooked, being ignored due to its lack of influence on more mainstream media. There is a possibility for a campus-run station to be commercial or non-commercial depending on how the administration defines its purpose. Based at a university, college radio upholds an educational and cultural mission (Baker, 2010). College radio stations are generally run by students and cater largely to the tastes of the students on campus (Baker, 2010). By allowing students to volunteer for positions at the station and take part in the development and managerial processes of media production, college radio serves its function as a teaching tool (Baker, 2010).

College radio stations are generally funded through the university's student activity fees. However, some stations receive additional financial help from the state or the university and by donations underwritten by local businesses (Newton, 2004). Sauls (2000) found that while being an outlet for the students' own musical tastes, the operation also reflects current cultural trends. Since most college radio stations are run by students and staff that are active in on-campus life, this allows radio personalities to come directly from the campus, which is an open door for diversity and can increase the connection between a multicultural society of students and the radio station.

Radio's main challenges in the last five decades have been contemporary technological advancements, each drawing listeners away and forcing radio to find new ways of reinventing itself in order to remain relevant. Radio has succeeded thus far in acclimating itself to the changing environment by integrating new music into its playlists

especially with the advent of television and its eventual takeover of programming originally exclusive to radio. With the debut of FM radio in the 1960s, Amplitude Modulation (AM) radio was forced to evolve its own lineup to include more talk radio and other niche programming (Albarran et al., 2007).

With radio again facing the threat of new technology like MP3 players, Internet streaming, and podcasts, there is great interest in seeing what radio, particularly college radio, does in order to remain a relevant medium. Specifically, with younger generations now able to choose their media content from a menu that is as diverse as the motivations driving their selections, both mainstream radio and college radio have no shortage of challenges (Albarran et al., 2007).

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Katz (1959) coined the phrase "uses and gratifications" calling attention to what an audience does with media instead of what media does to an audience. This approaches the subject from the perspective of the media consumer and seeks to understand why individuals use media and the gratifications they receive (Littlejohn, 2002; Wimmer & Dominick, 1991). The approach is summarized as follows:

Compared with classical effects studies, the uses and gratifications

approach takes the media consumer rather than the media messages

as its starting point, and explores his communication behavior in terms of

his direct experience with the media. It views the members of the

audience as actively utilizing media contents, rather than being passively

acted upon by the media. Thus, it does not assume a direct relationship between

messages and effects, but postulates instead that members of the audience put

9

messages to use and that such usages act as intervening variables in the process of effect (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974 p. 12).

As much as the early studies on uses and gratifications were primarily effects-oriented research and focused on what attracted audiences, Albarran et al. (2007) said that the perspective is now focused on the concept of an active audience as previously presented in McQuail's (1994) work:

The uses and gratifications approach has been centrally concerned with the choice, reception and manner of response of the media audience. A key assumption is that the audience member makes a conscious and motivated [choice] among channels and content to offer. Another basic tenet (more or less shared with reception research) is that the meaning of media experience can be learned only from people themselves. It is essentially subjective and interactive. (McQuail, 1994, p. 318).

In investigating how audiences use media, Cantril (1942) tested audiences with radio program quizzes and discovered unique audience gratifications. Herzog (1944) discovered gratifications of wishful thinking, emotional release, and appropriate behavioral advice among listeners of radio soap operas. Berelson (1949) studied readers of newspapers and found rational and non-rational uses like receiving news and other information and finding social contacts. This early research in the uses and gratifications paradigm provides the foundation for this study's theoretical approach.

Laswell (1948) suggested a three-function typology for media use. First, consumers used media for surveillance. Second, they used media for gathering information about the world that surrounds them. Third was a correlation in which

Laswell compared the lifestyles and behaviors of one media user to another. Into the 1950s, the body of work for uses and gratifications was growing but not fully developed, with much of the work lacking direction and rigor (McClung, 1999). Over the next few decades, a better development of typologies with a more rigorous approach to the research area provided for a third phase of evolution (McClung, 1999).

The late 1960s and early 1970s were said to be the era of maturity in uses and gratifications research – marked by attempts to use gratifications data to provide explanations of such facts of the communications process in which audience motives and expectations may be connected (Blumler & Katz, 1974, p. 13). An attempt at evolving the uses and gratifications approach beyond work that "virtually disclaims any theoretical pretensions or methodological commitment" was forming (Blumler & Katz, 1974, p. 21).

Rosengren (1974) began with improving and attempting to construct explanatory models, and the current research paradigm was moving towards a more theoretical stature. He sought to enhance the societal and psychological viewpoint by suggesting that gratification motives were associated with an individual's personal characteristics and social environment. Peled and Katz (1974) studied people's expectations of broadcasting during an Israeli conflict in October 1973. Their study concluded that people had differing expectations of the media and actively chose different media to achieve the gratifications they sought. The Israeli people studied sought the use of newspapers and radio to meet their need for information from an unexpected war and found that it lessened their anxiety and created a unified expression of national grief.

Greenberg (1974) studied young people's motives and gratifications in the use of media. The results of the study suggested a positive correlation between social behavior

variables including aggressive attitudes, television attitudes, and demographic attributes and particular viewing motivations such as habit, passing time, companionship, arousal, learning, relaxation, and to forget. Katz, Haas, and Gurevitch (1973) studied individuals who used media to connect or disconnect with themselves and others via three different relations: instrumental, affective, and integrative while in 1974, McLeod and Becker tested the validity of gratification measures in their study.

During the next phase of uses and gratifications research, scholars began to study the relationship between gratifications and media content (Katz, Hass, & Gurevitch, 1973). Lometti, Reeves and Bybee (1977) indicated that audiences did not differentiate between choices based on content or channel attributes alone, utilizing pivotal methodological procedures – cluster and factor analysis. Drawing from the Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974) uses and gratifications model, Palmgreen, Wenner, and Rayburn (1985) noted the assumptions outlined in the previous work as a standard parameter for uses and gratifications exploration. The assumptions are as follows:

(1) the audience is active, thus (2) much media use can be conceived as

goal-directed, and (3) competing with other sources of need gratification,

so that when (4) substantial audience initiative links need to media choice,

(5) media consumption can fulfill a wide range of gratifications although

(6) media content alone cannot be used to predict patterns of gratifications

accurately because (7) media characteristics structure the degree to which

needs may be gratified at different times, and further because (8) gratifications

obtained have their origins in media content, exposure in and of itself,

and/or the social situation in which exposure takes place (Palmgreen, Wenner, & Rayburn, 1985, p. 14).

Further study also incorporated existing communications theories into the uses and gratifications approach. Rayburn and Palmgreen (1984) combined the uses and gratifications approach with Fishbein and Azen's (1975) expectancy-value theory. This combination explained that gratifications sought from media are attributed to one's beliefs or expectations about media and the value one places on the material from media (Rayburn & Palmgreen, 1984). Swanson and Babrow (1989) surveyed 300 students in testing the combination of uses and gratifications and the expectancy-value theory. The study examined the news-viewing habits of the students. The study was designed to extract information about the students' attitudes towards television news, how often they watched the news, and the gratifications they obtained from it. Results of the study showed a correlation between students' expectancy values and how often they relied on the news to gratify their specific needs.

This period of uses and gratification research centered on the medium of television (McClung, 1999). Other mediums were studied by applying uses and gratifications theory, but television seemed to dominate most of the research. Although television seemed to be the medium of choice for the application, the task proved difficult due to the diversity of the content on television (McClung, 1999). McDonald (1990)
found two factors in his study of audience members who watch television news: surveillance and communicatory utility. Surveillance is the user's ability to monitor his/her environment, and communicatory utility pertains to users seeking information to

13

use in social interactions. The need for surveillance was corroborated in a later study focused on college students' use of the news media (Vincent & Basil, 1997).

Despite the longer trend of examining television with the uses and gratifications approach, radio has also been influential in the supporting the uses and gratifications approach. Houghton-Larsen (1982) conducted a study on gratifications sought through six different mediums. In the study, a discovery was made that radio was the medium that received the number one ranking for the source that best provides weather, time, and music but ranked second in the category of companionship. In general, the radio was seen primarily as an information source particularly in the areas of international and local news events (Houghton-Larsen, 1982).

Radio studies in uses and gratifications identified motives specific to radio listening such as companionship, filling a void in a daily routine, altering mood, relieving boredom, providing news and information, allowing active participation in events, and overcoming social isolation (Mendelsohn, 1964). Edwards and Singletary (1980) recognized in their study a connection between a person's lifestyle and music format preferences with an existing relationship between music format selection and personal identity. College students' radio listening motives included music, companionship, and general information content (Houghton-Larsen, 1982).

Before the popularity of 24/7 news networks, Towers (1985) showed that frequent listeners of radio found gratification in entertainment and in the immediacy of news. He also found a combination of surveillance and interaction within the listener's surroundings, as did McClung (1991) in his study on television news audiences, but McClung also noted the listener's need for diversion from the environment. Among

Armstrong and Rubin's (1989) study on patterns in motives for listening to and calling

into talk radio shows, findings were an affinity for talk radio, time spent listening, and a

relationship between communication and social differences. They also found that

listening motives were associated with communication and social variables.

Williams, Rice, and Rogers (1988) introduced demassification – the individual's

power over the medium – further defined it as the ability of the user to select from a wide

menu thus giving the user power over the choice of medium. They also introduced the

concept of asynchroneity or the concept of the message staggered in time. For example,

an MP3 file of a song can be stored on a device and later listened to by the user.

New Media Technology

Chamberlin (1994) studied new media technologies in the health communication

field. In his study, he found that individuals have more power of media in part to the

availability of new technologies. These individuals were able to save, send, receive, and

retrieve messages at their convenience. With the new technologies, the individual media

user is able to choose from a larger array of media previously only shared with other

individuals, a process known as demassification. Listeners of radio stations are able to

digitize the message they receive, thus manipulating the media and allowing more control

over the medium.

Scholars of uses and gratifications have recognized the importance of applying

this phenomenon to digital technologies such as the Internet (Newhagen & Rafaeli,

1996). Ruggiero (2000) mentioned the benefits of uses and gratifications theory for new

media technology with scholars continuing to study why a medium is used. Ruggiero

noted that with these new media outlets, the media consumers are more active in

selecting media sources they prefer. Hulsink (2005) saw the emergence of new communication technologies not as replacements for but instead as both an ally to and competition for traditional media.

In examining the use of new audio technologies in relation to traditional audio technology, Free (2005) compared college student listenership of traditional AM/FM radio with Internet radio, digital radio via cable, and satellite radio. In his study, a majority of respondents used traditional radio, and they did so for entertainment and information purposes. The uses of the newer audio technologies were for convenience, lack of commercials, quality, and increased choices.

Book and Grady (2005) studied listeners' preferences of satellite radio over terrestrial radio. The study revealed that the majority of respondents were satisfied with satellite radio and dissatisfied with terrestrial radio. Their problems with traditional AM/FM radio included repetition of the same music, the quality of commercials, and the dissatisfaction with the announcers. However, the respondents still viewed terrestrial radio as important for morning commutes in their cars in order to follow local news and information.

Albarran et al. (2007) studied undergraduate college students' uses and gratifications of new technologies and the impact on terrestrial radio. Their study attempted to understand how young people listened to music and examined their uses and gratifications specifically regarding music. The study revealed that young people prefer MP3 players as the medium for listening to music, and that traditional radio was useful only in specific situations like being in a car. Thus, it appears that gratifications once

served by traditional radio are being met by newer technology such as Internet streaming, MP3 usage and podcasting.

Internet Streaming

Along with these new media technologies provided through the Internet, social networking sites could also benefit a radio station's Web site by connecting with the audience. Radio stations and their on-air personalities are connecting to audiences via Twitter (Dorsey, 2006, San Francisco, CA) and other social networking, providing both connectivity and glimpses into people's lives (Johnson, 2009). The social networking sites have been found to be a valuable resource for providing timely updates about news events as well as a tool for obtaining story tips and ongoing information from members of the public who are directly connected to an event (Farhi, 2009).

Each of the most popular social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook (Zuckerberg, 2004, Menlo Park, CA) have different features and benefits (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). These features allow users to "(1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bonded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, para. 4). The radio station's audience can connect through these social network systems with the station and interact by sharing information, participating in contests, and becoming a part of a community.

Lin and Jefffres (2001) discovered in their study of how newspapers, radio stations, and television stations using the Web that the radio stations provided community service announcements in attracting listeners. Evans and Smethers (2001) found that local content was essential in positioning a station among its competitors and benefited from

using interactive elements in order "to build and cultivate new relationships with listeners and clients" (p. 23.). With new media technologies, social networking sites, and the Internet in general available to the audience, a community could be built and supported through interaction on both sides. The dedication of radio broadcasting to connecting to its listeners has been at the forefront since its inception. Through its ongoing characteristic of community service, radio provides a real difference in the lives of its listeners (Ryan, 2011).

The Internet has become an important component in the lives of college students (Jones, 2002). College students, as well as other young people, are relatively heavy users of the Internet (Mitchell & Beard, 2010). The Internet can be seen as the umbrella medium that is the over-arching gateway for other mediums such as MP3 music files, podcast files, and allows radio streaming for the audience. Use of MP3 players continues to grow in the United States (U.S.), as evidenced in recent research (Rose & Lenski, 2005). Ferguson, Greer, and Reardon's (2007) study on MP3 usage among college students supports the concept of the importance of this technology for the college-aged generation. In Hoover and Krishnamurti's (2010) study on college students' MP3 listening habits, over two-thirds of their 428 participants reported listening to their portable devices for three or more days a week while the remaining one-third of the participants reported five or more days a week.

MP3 Usage

From the audience perspective, patterns of media use are characterized by portability, control, convenience, and on-demand content (Rose & Lenski, 2005). These handheld devices are portable and act as a storage unit of MP3 files, allowing playback of

the files for the consumer to listen to. This allows the consumer to take his or her music or podcasts (MP3 files) anywhere and allows the consumer to listen to the files at the time of their choosing. This development in digital technology has had an impact on both audience and media (Ferguson, Greer, & Reardon, 2007).

Traditional radio was also seen as a primary source for news and information. Aside from its ability to deliver news and information, traditional radio did not appear to meet the gratifications sought by young listeners with nearly 50% of the sampled group indicating they never listen to radio (Albarran et al., 2007). While traditional radio is available on mobile devices, the respondents surveyed showed they do not take AM/FM radio with them; however, as these mobile devices, phones or MP3 players are becoming Internet-ready, the future shows some promise for radio (Albarran et al., 2007). To conclude their study, Albarran et al. (2007) said, "The evolving digital era provides young consumers with the ultimate in flexibility and choice with their music listening. Traditional radio appears to have limited utility in this news environment, and must re-think how to entice younger audiences to return to the medium." (p. 100).

Bachman (2005) stated that early adopters of MP3 devices have proven to be a great threat to radio. Lin (2005) found that younger radio listeners who downloaded MP3s did so as a diversion from radio and did so habitually. New audio technologies offer different experiences to the consumer, and may meet needs and gratifications beyond that of terrestrial radio (Albarran et al., 2007). According to Albarran et al. (2007), younger audiences prefer to listen to most types of audio via MP3 players and streaming media. With newer models of MP3 players becoming available at a faster rate

making previous models cheaper, students are able to afford portable devices at cheaper prices.

As technology continues to advance and competition becomes increasingly intense, MP3 players are capable of storing more content and have become more affordable than they were only a couple of years ago. For a large proportion of the younger generation, MP3 players are joining the Internet to become part of their daily life (Zeng, 2011, pp. 97-98).

The Internet increases the potency of the uses and gratifications perspective because it requires a higher level of user activity in comparison with other media and also because users deliberately choose which Web sites to visit (McClung & Johnson, 2010). Relative to college radio Web sites, McClung (2001) identified social integration and entertainment as primary motives for visiting online stations.

Some skeptics have concluded that today's diverse media landscape will render campus radio stations obsolete because students are trading in their stereos for computer speakers, forsaking FM radio for iTunes and file sharing (Read, 2006). As other audio technologies are adopted, younger audiences are spending less time listening to traditional radio (Arbitron, 2007). However, if the campus radio station either has a strong listenership or is looking to increase its listener base, the station should look towards broadcasting online thus broadening its reach and influence.

Last month, for instance, over 2,200 web surfers tuned in to WUOG online, and hundreds downloaded the station's podcast offerings. Listeners can visit the station's web site to view playlists, look up personal blogs of DJ's, and even submit recordings of their own music. (Read, 2006, p. 2).

20

According to Read (2006), a college radio station would benefit with a Web site that provides these new media technologies for its audience. These benefits include improved communication between the station and its audience and a way to enhance the station's brand and audience's loyalty. The station's Web site could offer podcasts of previously recorded shows that students may have missed from a previous day or offer the ability to download the playlist of a particular show. Working together with the faculty of the particular college, the radio station could provide educational announcements for students to download or stream. Local talent could have a free MP3 for students to download, which would provide a vital opportunity for the audience to connect with not only the local band, but also with the radio station. Lind and Medoff (1999) found that the primary reason that radio stations had a Web site was to connect with the audience.

Podcasts

The word podcast combines the concept of broadcasting on the iPod and is a medium that can be in the form of an audio or video broadcast made available to subscribers via the Internet to download onto a portable device such as the iPod (Notess, 2005). Consumers have the ability to access a podcast client such as iTunes and freely subscribe to the service, gaining access to downloading a podcast as an MP3, and the podcast service will automatically alert the subscriber when the next podcast becomes available to the consumer. The consumer can access the podcast file anywhere at any time because of their ability to store the files in portable devices. "With the invention of podcasting technology, a person can listen to or watch their favorite program missed during their normal programming schedule while waiting for somebody in a parking lot"

(Zeng, 2011, p. 99). Because of their convenience, podcasts are becoming more popular and useful due to their convenience of mobility and asynchroneity. Consumers are able to listen to an audio file or watch a video podcast whenever they download the file to their mobile device. A variety of programming is available including: Arts, Business, Comedy, Education, Game & Hobbies, Government & Organizations, Health, Kids & Family, Music, News & Politics, Religion & Spirituality, Science & Medicine, Society & Culture, Sports & Recreation, Technology and TV & Film (Chung, 2008).

Podcasting has great potential in benefiting students educationally. Professors at several universities, such as Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Boston University, have converged their lectures into podcasts in various courses (Silva, 2006). Podcasts can be utilized as another outlet for students in their education in collaboration with extra classroom content provided by professors or classroom assistants. These educational podcasts could contain supplemental materials such as additional lectures or course orientations, a useful technique when a student has missed a class, needs to catch up in a course, or prepare for a test (Chick, 2007). Chung (2008) found in his study of the motivations surrounding podcast use that college students have used podcasts because of their convenience for entertainment, to seek information, and for educational purposes. While clearly the original purpose of an MP3 player was to be used for entertainment, many are using the medium now to access course material and as a storage device because of its convenient size (Zeng, 2011).

WVVS Blaze FM 90.9

In 1970, two students, Charles Joyner and Walter Taylor, with the assistance of the Director of Student Activities Ken Ferrel, were able to secure the necessary funds for

the construction of Blaze FM (*Dr. Martin statement*, 1971; Pinson, 1998, Taylor, 2012).

Blaze FM first signed on the air in July 1971. At the time, the school was known as

Valdosta State College. Between 1979 and 2008 the station broadcasted at 5300 watts

covering nearly the entire city.

Blaze FM is a Federal Communications Commission (FCC)-licensed full power

non-commercial/educational radio station belonging to VSU that currently broadcasts

alternative and hip-hop music continuously using a computerized automated system.

During the day, disc jockeys tend to the schedule format shifts, playing certain types of

music during certain periods of the day. At night, disc jockeys host a variety of special

shows ranging from various types of music, talk, and special interest shows.

According to Blaze FM's constitution, the stations' purpose is three-fold: to

entertain and enlighten the student body of VSU, to provide facilities for training and

education, and to represent VSU in the station's broadcast radius (*The Constitution of*

WVVS-FM, 1993). Today, the frequency has been greatly reduced due to the relocation of

the station and its antenna. Blaze FM relocated its operation from the old Student Union

Building into the newly renovated and expanded Hopper Hall in 2009, causing a

significant change in its reach. Today it has a limited radius that is only able to cover the

entire campus and a few surrounding blocks.

The author was involved with Blaze FM over a period of several years as both a

disc jockey and program director. This relationship between the author and the radio

station has acted as the driving force to explore student use of Blaze FM. This

exploratory study aims to investigate these uses in order to gain a better understanding of

how on-campus residents engage in media for their own gratification either via radio or

another medium and whether or not Blaze FM helps to serve that purpose. To research these matters, two methods were applied in answering the author's research questions.

The first method of research was a survey consisting of questions pertaining to demographics, music preferences, radio listening habits, and new media technology preferences. This method was used to answer the following research questions (RQ):

RQ1: What are the current listening habits and music preferences of on-campus residents?

RQ2: What is the level of awareness among on-campus residents that VSU has a college-operated radio station?

Reese's (1996) assertion that college radio stations often have a deficit of research material pertaining to their audience's size and the effectiveness of the station's programs makes these two research questions integral to the study. Without this information, one cannot know whether or not Blaze FM currently has anything of value to offer to on-campus listeners. By incorporating general questions pertaining to the listening habits and music preferences of the students, the author will then be able to judge the audience's desires surrounding radio content. An important note to mention is that this does not mean the author will sit in judgment of these desires but will simply use this data as a determining factor in his conclusion of what the radio station can or should do in order to meet the needs of the on-campus population. The objective then becomes a matter of combining this information with the relevant scholarly material surrounding uses and gratifications theory in order to formulate semi-structured questions for focus groups that will attempt to answer the following:

RQ3: Based on current listening habits and music preferences coupled with the level of awareness of Blaze FM, what can the station do in order increase its listenership among on-campus residents?

Due to the open nature of focus groups and the flexibility of semi-structured questions, the author is able to allow the members of the group to speak freely and thus steer away from the question at hand in their own elaborative response. Wimmer and Dominick's (1991) statement regarding the purpose of focus groups holds true in this study as the author is attempting to understand the reasons behind a certain phenomenon. With the station being available to on-campus students, there must be reasons why students are or are not listening. The freedom afforded to the members of the focus groups allows them a comfortable setting in which they can speak objectively about the information resulting from the surveys. The intent here was to have a variety of students, who were not part of the sampled group, examine the results and offer their own conclusions and insights to the reasons behind the answers given.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

This thesis aims to explore any and all possible answers to the research questions in an attempt to find the necessary route to correcting the problem of the size of Blaze FM's audience. There is also the added goal to inspire future research and to have this study serve as an instructional foundation for students using action research and working to make change happen. This study will examine the sampled students' listening habits and music preferences and their levels of awareness pertaining to Blaze FM in order to gauge who is and who is not listening and why or why not. By applying the uses and gratifications theory as the conceptual framework, the study will help to offer suggestions that the radio station could integrate for on-campus students in order to increase its listenership. As with the ever-growing concern for the fate of commercial radio, the future of college radio, especially a smaller operation such as Blaze FM, becomes an even greater unknown.

Keith and Krause (1993) found that the size of the station does not matter when it comes to identifying its audience. In order to identify the audience, Reese (1996) contended that college radio stations usually have little if any research in gauging information about their target audience. Reese (1996) suggested a cost-effective method in procuring audience data: in-house research – specifically in the form of a survey.

In-house research surveys can provide common yet useful information about an audience such as the number of regular listeners, demographics, and readings of an audience's view of the station (Sauls, 2000). The in-house research survey can be tailored to go beyond what a ratings book could provide and discover programming preferences and radio listening habits among the general audience data (Reese, 1996).

Following the guidelines set forth by Reese (1996), a survey was created with the parameters designed to gauge the VSU students' awareness of and interest in Blaze FM. Reese (1996) provided three types of information within the confines of a short questionnaire as follows: 1) respondents were categorized in demographic data to insure results were not slanted toward any particular sex, race, or age group; 2) the survey asked the respondents about their current listening habits; and 3) the survey asked for specific information on college radio listening habits.

Due to the current limited frequency radius of Blaze FM that mainly encompasses the campus of VSU, the participants that were targeted for this study had to live on the VSU campus because they are exposed to the full clear signal of Blaze FM at all times. Understanding what devices or services students are using instead of listening to Blaze FM helps determine the uses and gratifications portion of this study. An important goal of this research is to explore how to increase the gratification of Blaze FM for students.

A second theme produced through the research in the literature review is community involvement on college campuses. While not a direct focus of the research that will take place in the forthcoming chapters, an important point to make is that community involvement is a factor in the growth of college radio stations. Many of the research points found in the completion of this thesis can be extrapolated and applied to

gaining increased community involvement in order to help the station grow. A college

radio station serves both the campus community and the community at large (Brant,

1981) through its advertisements and disc jockey's announcements similar to those at a

commercial radio station.

Survey Analysis: Construction and Execution of the Survey

The survey for this study consisted of 15 questions. The questions included

demographic questions seeking a general landscape of the audience, music preferences,

radio listening habits concerning radio in general and specifically Blaze FM, and use of

new media technologies. A closer examination of the demographic analysis can be found

in Appendix A. After clearance was granted through the VSU Institutional Review Board

(IRB) committee (see Appendix C), the survey was dispersed through three different

classes upon each professor's approval and permission. The first class was a large

introduction to media course that consisted of the majority of the respondents. This class

was comprised of lower division students from differing majors. The second class was a

large introduction course in speech communication that consisted of students from

differing class levels and majors. The final class was a smaller speech communication

course that consisted of students from differing backgrounds but had the greater

possibility of containing students that had similar majors or area of study due to its

smaller class size and status as an upper level-course.

The classes that were selected were not at random; they were chosen due to the

large cross section of undergraduate students enrolled in each class by the faculty

members instructing each course. Sprinthall (2007) identified several reasons for

choosing classes with high cross sections of students when utilizing the classroom section

for survey research. Classes with large cross sections help the researcher minimize the

Hawthorne Effect, a situation where experimental conditions effect the behavior of the

participants (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939), and increase the spread of the data over

different groups providing the best possible cross section in collegiate research helping to

protect the external validity of the research project (Sprinthall, 2007).

The size of the classes and the various areas of study among the students in these

classes provided the researcher with a diverse group of respondents, including many that

lived on campus. Before the surveys were distributed among the students, a consent

statement, featured on the surveys, was read aloud to the students informing them of the

terms of participation, that it was voluntary, and that the participants would remain

anonymous. From the survey data collected, tables were constructed to illustrate the data

analysis of the survey questions.

Focus Groups: A Thematic Analysis

The second methodology used in this research was the focus group interview. As

a technique involving a small group led in a topic discussion, Berg (2009) says "focus

group interviews are a useful strategy" (p. 158). These allow participants to answer

openly and freely about their ideas. In a focus group, participants will engage in

brainstorming and bounce ideas back and forth from each other providing detail-rich data

for the moderator.

To interpret the focus group data, thematic analysis will be used in recognizing

and grouping similar answers among the focus group participants. Through careful study

of the participants' responses, themes will emerge shedding light on detailed answers. In

Lonsdale and North's (2011) uses and gratifications analysis on why people listen to

music, thematic analysis was used in identifying patterns in participants' reasons for listening to music.

Although not a well-known analytic method, Braun and Clarke (2006) cited thematic analysis offering benefits such as being accessible and theoretically flexible in interpreting data. "Through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). This flexibility in design allowed respondents to openly answer with their opinions, and stimulate one another in pursuing parallel lines of thinking that might not have emerged in an individual situation.

A media-related class of fifteen students provided three focus groups consisting of five per group. To preserve anonymity, numbers were written down on notecards and students randomly selected the numbers. This was done so that numerical labels rather than student names could be used in data collection. Before beginning each focus group, the participants were given IRB approved consent forms to be signed and were read aloud the consent statement by the moderator.

A digital recording device was present to capture all responses for transcription of the data (see Appendix B). Prior to the beginning of the research, approval was granted through VSU's IRB committee, as the collection of data would contain no identifying marks that could allude to the personal identity of any students that participated in the study.

Each session was conducted in a semi-structured manner with the author as the moderator asking a question and allowing the participants each a chance to answer if they chose to. The questions asked in the focus groups were derived from the survey data

collected. Other questions focused on finding themes derived from previous uses and gratifications research such as companionship, entertainment, information seeking, and passing time.

Chapter IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the following section, the results of both the survey and the focus groups are presented followed by a discussion outlining the goals for increasing listener awareness and gratification through Blaze FM.

Survey Research: Response and Data Analysis

In total there were 251 respondents to the survey portion of the research. Out of those respondents, only 140 students resided on campus. The target audience for this study was students that lived on campus due to the limited frequency of Blaze FM. These students had access to Blaze FM 24 hours a day since they were always within reach of the station's signal. This study was intended to investigate their listening habits, their level of awareness of Blaze FM, and what could Blaze FM offer them.

The objective of the survey portion of the research was to answer the first two research questions contained in the study.

RQ1: What are the current listening habits and music preferences of on-campus residents?

RQ2: What is the level of awareness among on-campus residents that VSU has a college-operated radio station?

This information gives insight into the demographics of students who are currently living on campus, which is information that could be beneficial not only to

Blaze FM, but is also of value to the university as well. The survey concludes with questions concerning new media technology consumption through Internet streaming, and podcasting.

Demographic Information

The initial survey was dispersed to 251 students. Because the deciding factor in order to be included in the surveyed sample was the respondent's answer of yes to living on campus, only 140 surveys were used for further examination. Of these 140 respondents 59.29% were female; 40.71% were male. The ethnicity of the sample group was nearly split between Anglo-Caucasian (45.71%) and African American (41.43%). The sample consisted of 5.71% Hispanic respondents, 4.29% Asian-Pacific Islander. The remaining 2.86% considered their ethnicity to be of other origin. These results show the diversity of students who live on campus and provide information regarding to whom Blaze FM should be targeting its programming. The station currently plays a variety of music with special shows at night; however, during the business day, the block schedule is split between the genres widely known as alternative and hip-hop.

In order to further narrow the demographics, the question pertaining to the student's class level was asked. Freshmen made up 50.71% of the sample, while sophomores reflected 37.51%. Rounding out the bottom three categories were juniors at 11.43%, seniors at 1.43%, and 0.71% considered their class level to be in the senior-plus category. This selection was to allow for those who are fifth-year seniors.

The area of study category proved to be a good mix of majors considering the survey was conducted in only three classes. The top area of study among those surveyed was communication arts with 20.71% of the respondents. Mass media was the major of

18.57% of respondents. Those with undecided majors represented 11.43% of the respondents, 7.86% of the respondents chose the *other* category which included nursing, a popular area of study at VSU.

The next question on the survey pertained to the student's preference in music with six choices: rock, pop/top 40, rap/hip-hop, classical, country, and *other*. The leading preference in the music category was rap/hip-hop with 37.14% of the respondents. This choice was a combination because of the similarities between the two styles of music. Both this combination and the pop/top 40 genre are featured on commercial radio, but only rap/hip-hop is featured on Blaze FM. The next popular choice was pop/top 40 with 22.14% if the votes. Pop/top 40 is a combination choice that represents music heard on commercial radio stations including songs that were played or could have been played on college radio before becoming popular. Rock music received 17.86% of the votes. Rock encompasses alternative and independent music which are both frequently played on Blaze FM. Country music was the preference for 11.43% of the group; this choice was made available because of the university's southern locale and the prevalence of country music fans in the area. The *other* category represented 8.57% of the group; respondents were not asked to clarify what types of music they considered to be in this category. Lastly 2.86% of the group preferred classical music which is commonly played on lower-powered commercial stations similar to college radio stations.

The next question asked whether or not students enjoyed discovering new music before hearing the songs on mainstream radio. A nearly unanimous 95% of the students answered "yes" and the remaining 5% answered "no". This question was asked in order to determine the percentage of students who enjoy a key benefit of listening to college

radio stations and was necessary because the results clearly show that students are eager to find new music – something Blaze FM is recognized for offering in its programming. The question was derived from Sauls (2000) in which he discovered that college radio often plays underground music or music that is out of the top 40 mixes for various genres.

Listening Habits and Radio Awareness

The next question focused directly on the student's preferred choice of media specifically for listening to music. Students who preferred to listen to music on their computers comprised 37.14% of the sample. This category represents listening to commercial stations already streaming online, podcasts, Internet streaming services such as Pandora and iTunes, which allows the user to store their MP3 files as a library of music. Students who preferred to listen using their MP3 players represented 33.57% of the sample, while listening to music on cell phones was 15%. Only 10% of the sampled group preferred to listen to music on the radio, and 3.57% preferred listening by other means. Less than one percent, (0.71%) still preferred to listen to compact discs.

In addition to music, students were then asked what other types of programming they preferred to listen to on the radio. The selections available to them were local/international news, celebrity/entertainment news, sports, contests, and *other*. Sports was the dominating category with 36.43% of the respondents' preferring this programming, followed by 29.29% choosing celebrity/entertainment news. Only 16.43% preferred local/international news, and 15.71% answered *other* as their preference. As before, students were not asked to elaborate on their answer. Contests were the preferred choice of programming for only 2.14% of the respondents.

Students were asked if they listen to the radio. The majority of respondents (40.71%) answered that they sometimes listen while 20.71% rarely listen. Occasional listeners made up 17.14% of the sample, and 12.14% said they listen to the radio a lot. Only 9.29% responded that they never listen to the radio.

The following question asked was whether or not students were aware that VSU offered a student-run radio station. A majority of the sample (65%) responded that they were not aware of the station with 35% responding that they were aware. However, of the percentage of respondents that were aware of Blaze FM's existence, 55.10% responded that they never listen to the station. Listening rarely was the response for 28.57% of the sample, 8.16% reported that they sometimes listen, and 6.12% said that they occasionally listen. A mere 2.04% said that they listen to the station a lot.

The next question addressed the students' habits regarding listening to music by streaming the content online. Almost one-third (32.86%) of the respondents said that they never listen to radio online, and 20% reported frequently listening to online radio. Students who said they sometimes listened represented 17.86% of the sample and 15% reported listening occasionally to the radio online. Finally, students who rarely listen to radio by streaming the content online made up 14.29% of the sample.

The students were then asked about their use of podcasts. The majority of respondents (52.86%) said they never listen to podcasts. Students who reported sometimes listening to podcasts made up 19.29% of the group, and 12.86% said they listen rarely. Less than ten percent, (9.29%) reported frequently listening to podcasts while 5.71% said that they occasionally listen.

Survey Discussion

The answers that were derived from the survey questions proved insightful into the on-campus audience, their listening habits, and their level of awareness of Blaze FM. The data collected from the survey laid the foundation for questions directed towards the focus group. These questions were tailored to provide more detailed responses pertaining to what Blaze FM needs to offer its student audience given the results of the sample. This data is represented in tables provided for the reader in Appendix A.

The fact became clear to the author that the student population on campus is not listening to Blaze FM – not necessarily because students are not listening to the radio these days – but largely because students are not aware that such an outlet exists. Michael Taylor (2012), the current faculty advisor for Blaze FM, noted in an interview that students on campus are largely uninformed of the wide variety of activities and programs that are available to them such as Blaze FM.

Focus Groups

The focus group portion of the research consisted of three focus groups from a media-related class. The students, with a background in media and communications, were able to voice their opinions on what Blaze FM could offer based on the data given from the survey and in regard to the uses and gratifications approach. Thematic analysis was used to interpret the focus group discussion in finding patterns within the respondents' answers. The themes that were uncovered provided the answer to the third, and possibly the most important, research question:

RQ3: Based on current listening habits and music preferences coupled with the level of awareness of Blaze FM, what can the station do in order to increase its listenership among on-campus residents?

The answers these students gave resonated with some of the gratifications from previous research on the uses and gratifications approach including: entertainment, information, and passing time; along with another gratification theme that appeared in the focus group answers – control of the content.

The first question asked in each of the focus groups referred to why students sometimes listen to the radio today. The overall answer to this question was that students enjoy starting their day with radio in the morning while preparing for class. Student 7 replied, "For entertainment, I listen to the radio when I am cleaning up in the morning or when I want to dance." Student 10 replied, "I listen to the radio now only for morning news and talk shows." Mendelsohn (1964) discovered that radio "brackets" the day for people in serving as an accompaniment gratification.

Next, the focus groups were asked their opinion on the survey respondents' preferences of medium in listening to music (40% mobile devices, 37% computer, and 10% radio). The theme for this question was the gratification of control over content. Student 6 replied, "I think everyone likes to have a little control on what they listen to… a lot of times on radio they will play just the popular songs and you will hear it five times a day." Student 10 agreed and reacted to Student 6's response by saying, "Like Student 6 said, you like to have control over what you hear and on the radio it's either country or pop music down here… sometimes I am in the mood for… something different, I like having the control over what you are listening to." Student 5 said, "…with Pandora, it's

more customizable. When I listen to radio, I have to put up with all the talking, and advertising, but with Pandora I can skip a song, or choose a specific artist."

It was then brought to the focus groups' attention that 65% of the sample said they were unaware of Blaze FM. The theme for this question was lack of advertising and the ability to choose content. This shows that student involvement with the station's advertising to the campus is a crucial element in a student run station.

The focus groups feel that the ability to chose content would bring attention to the station and keep students listening to Blaze FM. Student 10 stated, "Lack of advertising is the biggest issue and plus you are competing with other radio stations." Student 8 replied, "That is definitely what it is, lack of advertising, but I feel like if it was more student driven, if the students had an opportunity to choose what they want to listen to, and maybe they would be more aware, or more events sponsored by the radio station."

Discussion of new media technologies implemented took place in seeing which ones Blaze FM could offer students to gain more listeners. Podcasts were discussed and the groups found it potentially beneficial for Blaze FM to offer podcast content. Student 2 responded, "That would allow for, as far as content [is concerned], if people are wanting to hear sports updates, or…local news, that is something they could go on and look for themselves, if it's included in a five minute recap of those things… that would be very beneficial." For the podcasts option, the theme of control of the content came up again in the form of being able to customize. Student 1 replied, "I think it allows for more customizability, allows more people to be more active in the act of listening to the radio, they are able to choose [by] saying, 'This is what I want to listen to' and it allows you to know what your audience wants when you look at this [and see] what is being

downloaded 50 times, and this is being downloaded 5 times, and you go 'Okay, this is what the students want more [of]."

Student 3 touched base on the educational benefits of podcasting, "Personally one of my teachers… all of his lectures were podcasts. [We could] listen to it whether we were in our car, at the pool, or out walking. It gives you that option that anytime you can be mobile with it you are going to win. You are giving people that option, that chance, the choice to choose whatever they want whenever they want to." These educational podcasts could contain additional lectures or course orientations, a useful technique when they have missed a class, need to catch up in a course, or prepare for tests (Chick, 2007).

Internet streaming seemed to be a key suggestion for something Blaze FM could offer students. Student 3 responded, "Anytime you do streaming, you give people the option and a chance to voice what they expect or want to hear or talk about, then they feel more comfortable tuning in because its more about them, it allows them to customize what it is that they want to receive and the information they want to hear." Student 13 mentioned, "I think that streaming would open a whole new window of opportunities for Blaze FM." Internet streaming would attract more attention to the Web site of the station and the Web site could offer many features for the students, such as MP3s, podcasts, and links to other organizations, announcements, and educational content. Student 9 followed up on Student 1 in saying, "I grew up in Scranton, PA and at my friends school they had online streaming, and were #1 for online college radio in that area… if they [Blaze FM] were to do online streaming, it would get more listeners."

Other than music, students showed to favor sports and celebrity/entertainment news, and the focus groups were asked if this type of programming could be something

40

Blaze FM should consider offering students. The consensus on this question leaned towards more informational than entertainment along with local news. Student 13 responded, "I think it could be an option, I don't think it should be a continuous through out the day thing, but we should include international news and local news." Student 6 said, "…as far as news goes on student radio, stay with local stuff, what's going on with the high schools, the alcohol sales on Sunday, stuff like that. That's what people want is what's going on in the city." And Student 2 responded, "I agree with Student 8 and 6, we want to know what is happening and if it is relevant to us. I do enjoy sports, entertainment and celebrity news, that's not relevant to us now, not today, I want to know if this person might be running for mayor, or government, stuff like that." A theme of localness of radio can be identified as a content gratification for students in keeping in touch with what is going on not only on their campus, but in the community of which they are a part.

Combining the survey data, focus group analysis, and an interview with current faculty advisor for Blaze FM, Taylor (2012), a picture of why students are not interested in the radio becomes clear; most students do not know that there is a radio station that is associated with VSU. The use of action research can reverse that by formulating the next steps for future station managers or faculty advisors seeking to increase awareness of Blaze FM.

Action research is literally an undertaking by participants with common interests who are committed to improving a situation of which they are a part (Berg, 2009). "Action research is a collaborative approach to research that provides people with the means to take systematic action in an effort to resolve specific problems" (Berg, 2009,

p. 251). Considering the data this study yielded, plans can be developed that may resolve the public awareness deficit that Blaze FM faces and help to increase its listening audience.

Berg (2009) said that action research works through three different phases: "looking, thinking, and action" (p. 251). By following the guidelines presented in the first phase, the author assessed the level of awareness and the listening habits of the on-campus students and took into consideration what the students were doing instead of listening to Blaze FM. Proceeding to the next phase involved careful interpretation of the data gathered from the survey questions; the results shed light on the current situation. This was done through the random focus group interviews. In the final phase, the author considered which actions might result in the desired effective change that would be to increase the station's audience.

In using action research, everyone who is essential in creating a relationship between the station and the students would become involved with the activities that would be suggested to realize this goal. As the sole researcher, the author assessed the necessary information and identified the problem. The on-campus students, in this case the community members, participated in the research by clarifying the problem. Lastly, through Taylor's (2012) interview, several suggestions arose in shaping the action portion of this research.

According to Taylor (2012), increasing awareness of the radio is easy. In order to increase awareness of the campus radio station, the manager needs to advertise in much the same way other organizations do. Flyers, painted sheets, sidewalk chalk messages, and leaflets distributed amongst the students would be a simple executable task that

would greatly raise the awareness of Blaze FM (Taylor, 2012). With an increased

listening audience, the transition from terrestrial radio to online radio becomes easier for

VSU to enable and endorse. Advertising could increase listenership of Blaze FM,

enabling an increase in gratification for students to find new underground or emerging

artists (Sauls, 2000). The increase in listeners then allows the station to make the

transition to online radio in order to incorporate the new media technologies utilized by

the majority of the students on campus.

In the case of Blaze FM, students are not listening because the station does not

meet their demands of being on the Internet and is not very well known. As found in the

focus groups, students want information, and if Blaze FM wants to increase listeners,

news, talk, and music must find the proper balance rather than simply thinking that

students only want to listen to music. Listening to feedback is an important part of uses

and gratification. Adjusting to feedback will only increase user gratification because

adjustment is a crucial portion of increasing user attentiveness to a specific product.

The station needs to accrue enough satisfied listeners to move its programming

from radio to live streaming over the Internet. Students identify this as a necessary action

due to convenience and ease of use of the radio station. Appeasing students is part of

increasing end user gratification, which is directly correlated via survey and focus group

data to increasing the listenership of Blaze FM.

Increasing the number of personalities on the radio is as simple as posting the

advertisement for positions available, something that has not been done since the

inception of Blaze FM, noted Taylor (2012). The ability to affordably increase the

listener base for Blaze FM has been discovered and is entirely possible. Changing listener

awareness is as easy as letting the student know the radio station is available to them, and will provide them with important news for more than campus wide activities.

Taylor's (2012) suggestions are not an end-all in solving this issue. Although these ideas are simple to implement and would help the cause, Taylor's own interests on advising the station appear to be a strong cause of impeding Blaze FM's potential in changing. He says, "I decided that station shall remain un-academic, remain a student activity, in all aspects be student operated. The role of the advisor is to make sure the FCC regulations are complied with; as far as programming and quality of sound is purely the decision of the student staff." (Taylor, 2012). Along with the advisor, a leadership team of supportive students should be present in formulating a plan of action for the station in attracting students. In a slump of student involvement, a strong station leadership team should take an active role in seeking interested students in order to rebuild a purposeful staff.

In regard to keeping academics out of Blaze FM and in order to keep it a student activity, the author is at odds with the current status quo and favors involving students from broadcasting classes to use Blaze FM in fulfilling one of the station's purposes as stated in its constitution: *to provide facilities for training and education*. Relying on students outside of the classroom setting to volunteer at Blaze FM for training or educational purposes apparently has not worked for some time during the current station administration.

The research from this study shows that students are not aware of Blaze FM; students are listening to music and other programming on portable devices, and they prefer to have greater control over the content they receive. Currently Blaze FM has

moved away from the block format into what Taylor describes as checkerboard programming, saying, "now it depends on the scheduling of the jocks. Daniel [station manager at the time] would schedule two-hour blocks in junction with what the jocks preferred during the day." (Taylor, 2012). With students' preferring to listen on their portable devices and demanding control of their content, clearly Blaze FM needs to shift its focus to converging with new media technologies online.

It is the author's suggestion that, in order for Blaze FM to begin its transformation into a more digital era and in order to satisfy the needs of on-campus students and the outlying community as well, the starting point is to rebuild leadership of the station first either by creating more time for the faculty advisor to be more hands-on with the station or bringing in a non-student as general manager, who can dedicate the necessary time to the station and give it the attention it desperately needs, along with generating fresh leadership goals and a new vision for Blaze FM in assessing and solving the current issues. They have been identified, the participants have voiced their opinions, and now is time to implement change and fulfill the third phase of action research.

Chapter V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Blaze FM is very limited in what the station currently offers its student audience while seeking to be the source of their gratifications. Its frequency radius only stretches to each end of the campus and a few surrounding blocks. This limitation affects the station's ability to service the outlying community. Until a replacement tower can be put into place, the signal will continue to be limited to on-campus residents.

This study intended to examine on-campus students' listening habits and their level of awareness of Blaze FM. With this information, this study used the framework of the uses and gratifications approach in discovering what Blaze FM could offer students to draw their attention and fulfill their gratifications. In this study, it was mentioned that Hulsink (2005) saw the emergence of new communication technologies not as replacements for traditional media such as radio, but that the new communication technologies both compliment and compete with traditional media. In this regard, the new media technologies such as Internet streaming, podcasts, and even applications for mobile devices would benefit Blaze FM and all are viable options for Blaze FM to offer students.

Williams, Rice, and Rogers (1988) also introduced the concept of asynchroneity. Asynchroneity is the concept of the message staggered in time. For instance, an MP3 file of a song can be stored on a device and later listened to by the user. According to the findings

from the focus groups, if the students were given more customizability and control over the content, then the number of student listeners would increase.

The radio serves as a companion in the morning for those who listen to prepare for their day, and Blaze FM should offer some sort of programming that incorporates local and international news, along with sports updates, and some celebrity and entertainment news. The gratifications that are more likely satisfied by these features are entertainment, demassification, information, passing time, and accompaniment.

Limitations

The survey, an in-house research tool, could be expanded in its range of questions in gauging students' listening habits and preferences. The survey could also have been distributed to more students who live on campus in order to provide a sample that better represents the target audience. The focus groups could have involved students from more media-related classes for more relative input on the survey respondents' answers. Perhaps students from classes outside of the media department would have given an outsider's perspective on the survey respondents' answers.

Further limitations to this study include the choice of classes for survey distribution, and focus group procedures. Although the areas of study were well mixed, the survey was distributed to three classes all of which were on track for communication or media areas of study. For future studies of this kind, classes outside these two areas of study are suggested to use for surveys. The focus group procedure incorporated the use of only one class, a media related class of fifteen students. More students should have been used for more detailed answers of what Blaze FM could offer.

This study was intended to be an exploratory study on the local impact of college radio. The purpose was to investigate the listening habits and music preferences of students within the frequency range of Blaze FM and determine what Blaze FM could offer the students in becoming a part of their daily routines and gratifying the students. This data revealed that the majority of students that live on campus were not aware of Blaze FM. However, with the data provided in this study, certain benchmarks can be set in order to secure the sustainability of Blaze FM.

For future research, the author recommends further investigating the convergence of new media technologies and radio. The data from this study is a step in highlighting students' uses of new media technologies, and in order for college radio to gratify those needs of the students, stations must look to converge with online streaming, podcasting, and mobile device applications. The definition of what radio *is* will change again taking on the new media technologies in gratifying an audience in remaining a viable on campus medium.

Recommendations

This study has explored the on-campus students' listening habits and level of awareness of Blaze FM through survey analysis and has discovered solutions for Blaze FM in increasing its listening audience through focus group analysis. Together, both methods of research have provided vital information for the campus station. With the information from this study, benchmarks can now be set by the author in reviewing suggestions for future station managers of Blaze FM.

Financially, Blaze FM is limited to a budget determined by the Student Activity Fee Budget Committee of an annual amount equivalent to $2,500 (*The Constitution of*

WVVS-FM., 1993). A higher fraction of this budget should be used to fulfill apparent need for promotion. Earlier it was mentioned in an interview with Taylor (2012) that marketing tools such as painted sheets, fliers, and leaflets should be distributed amongst the students. Some of the budget should also be used for contests, giveaways, or concerts as methods to establish awareness.

Adopting new media technologies is key to Blaze FM increasing its listening audience as found in this study. However, incorporating these new media technologies costs money. Ideally, the Student Activity Fee Budget Committee would grant the campus station an increase in its budget to help achieve the goals of streaming online, podcasting, and MP3 usage. In the event of the committee not allowing an increase in budget money, then Blaze FM should look to hosting fundraisers in order to meet financial goals.

Student leadership should be addressed in reviving student involvement with Blaze FM. The campus station is a student-run college radio station with a faculty advisor present to only advise the students and to make sure that the station is being run appropriately and accordingly to FCC guidelines. A strong station manager surrounded by station officers with a common vision and aspiration would help foster an environment of progression and would be beneficial to Blaze FMs success and sustainability.

The station should alter its programming in accordance with the survey respondents' answers showing a preference for rap/hip-hop music and sports programming. Special shows at night should have a schedule that the students could become familiar with each semester and that caters to their preferences. Blaze FM should

seek to sponsor more events and activities with other campus organizations and departments to increase its visibility on campus and even throughout the community. Partnerships between student buildings and student transportation (campus shuttles) with Blaze FM would provide more opportunities for exposure to students.

These few suggestions would benefit Blaze FM in becoming more aware to students on campus and help in continuing the station's success. It is the author's intent to see the future sustainability of Blaze FM, and, through this study, the foundation has been set for future research and action toward seeing Blaze FM thrive and survive.

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APPENDIX A:

Survey Response Tables

Table A1

Q2. What is your gender?

	Male	Female
	57	83
N=	140	140
N%	40.7%	59.3%

Table A2

Q3. What is your ethnicity?

	African American	Anglo-Caucasian	Asian Pacific Islander	Hispanic	Other
Count	58	64	6	8	4
N=	140	140	140	140	140
N%	41.4%	45.7%	4.3%	5.7%	2.9%

Table A3

Q4. Current Student Classification?

	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Senior+
Count	71	50	16	2	1
N=	140	140	140	140	140
N%	50.7%	35.7%	11.4%	1.4%	0.7%

Table A4

Q5. Area of Study?

	Communication Arts	Mass Media	Undecided	Other (Nursing)	Business Administration
Count	29	26	16	11	9
N=	140	140	140	140	140
N%	20.7%	18.6%	11.4%	7.9%	6.4%

Table A5

Q6. Preference in Music?

	Rock	Pop/Top 40	Rap/Hip-Hop	Classical	Country	Other
Count	25	31	52	4	16	12
N=	140	140	140	140	140	140
N%	17.9%	22.1%	37.1%	2.9%	11.4%	8.6%

Table A6

Q7. Do you enjoy discovering new music before it becomes popular?

	Yes	No
Count	133	7
N=	140	140
N%	95%	5%

Table A7

Q8. Preference in Medium?

	Computer	MP3 Player	Cell Phone	CD Player	Radio	Other
Count	52	47	21	1	14	5
N=	140	140	140	140	140	140
N%	37.1%	33.6%	15%	0.7%	10%	3.6%

Table A8

Q9. Do you listen to the radio?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Occasionally	A lot
Count	13	29	57	24	17
N=	140	140	140	140	140
N%	9.3%	20.7%	40.7%	17.1%	12.1%

Table A9

Q10. Are you aware of Blaze FM?

	Yes	No
Count	49	91
N=	140	140
N%	35%	65%

Table A10

Q11. [If Aware], do you listen to Blaze FM?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Occasionally	A lot
Count	27	14	4	3	1
N=	140	140	140	140	140
N%	19.3%	10%	2.9%	2.1%	0.7%

Table A11

Q13. Do you listen to radio online through internet streaming?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Occasionally	A lot
Count	46	20	25	21	28
N=	140	140	140	140	140
N%	32.9%	14.3%	17.9%	15%	20%

Table A12

Q14. Do you listen to radio through podcasting?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Occasionally	A lot
Count	74	18	27	8	13
N=	140	140	140	140	140
N%	52.9%	12.9%	19.3%	5.7%	9.3%

Table A13

Q15. Other than music, what other programming would you prefer to listen to on radio?

	Local/Intl. News	Celeb/Ent. News	Sports	Contests	Other
Count	23	41	51	3	22
N=	140	140	140	140	140
N%	16.4%	29.3%	36.4%	2.1%	15.7%

APPENDIXB:

Focus Group Transcriptions

Focus Group Transcriptions

Focus Group 1

First, forty percent of the sampled students listed that they listen to the radio for music or information sometimes. It was evenly split for the students who hardly listen or mostly listen to it. What are some reasons that you think students still sometimes listen to the radio?

Student 4: People like the radio because they grew up listening in their parents cars, and when I am bored I flip through channels, because we all have our favorite genres, like you will be in a country mood, and like its like flipping through CDs or going through your mp3 player, but I like listening to what is new on the radio.

Student 2: I feel the same way; I don't always want to know what song is coming on next. When I listen to my iPod or CDs I know exactly what is coming on next, and it is a good opportunity to find someone new.

Student 10: I listen to the radio now differently than I did when I was younger. I listen to my iPod now for music but I listen to the radio now only for morning news and talk shows.

Second question, students at VSU prefer to listen to music through mobile devices (48% sampled), second were computers (37%). Only 10% said they listen to music on the radio. What are your opinions on this and why is that?

Student 6: I think everyone likes to have a little control on what they listen to, they like to see at least a genre, a lot of times on radio they will play just the popular songs and you will hear it 5 times a day. I personally listen to radio because I don't have

the means to a mobile device. If I had the means I would prefer a mobile device to listen to what I want.

Student 8: I don't listen to the radio other than in the car. It is convenient in the car along with the cd player, but sometimes you do want that present time fill in with the personality on the radio, the talk shows and the give always, and the news that you stay current with on there, but as far as listening to music on a mobile device does that pertain to the cell phone? Because I do not have music on my cell phone but i like to keep it separate than my iPod that has my music on it.

Student 10: I don't listen to music on the radio because I like indie music and there aren't many stations that play it. If you do pick it up, you cant even really hear it. Like student six said, you like to have control over what you hear, and on the radio its either country or pop music down here sometimes I'm in the mood for oldies, or something different, i like having the control over what you are listening to.

65% of the sampled I had said they were unaware that VSU has there own student run college station. Why do you think this is?

Student 4: I think when it comes to blaze FM, not a lot of people know what the mass media department offers, and non mass media people always ask what they offer and it gets annoying because when you mention that, they always say 'what is that' because i have to explain everything we do and how its a bunch of things, and that we should explain to people that we do have radio shows... if they were more informed I think they would listen to it more.

Student 10: I completely agree with student 4 and i think that if i was not a media student I would not know about blaze fm. lack of advertising is the biggest issue, and plus you are competing with other radio stations.

Student 8: That's definitely what it is, lack of advertising, but I feel like if it was more student driven, if the students had an opportunity to choose what they want to listen, and maybe they would be more aware, or more events sponsored by the radio station.

Student 2: People would be more willing to listen to it if they could choose what they could listen to... if they had a specific genre number 1, and if people could choose, I feel like I use to listen to it, but now it is a huge array of songs and i never really never know what I am getting and there are times that I really don't like what I am listening to

Do you think perhaps that is going with that direction and how students that were surveyed and how they showed favor to mobile devices and internet streaming, are those certain channels that blaze FM can capitalize on in order to offer that to students, in talking about how students want to make the choice of music they want to hear, and instead of just calling in and requesting a song, they might have more power to go online and request a song that way or have a way to choose a song they want to hear next, could blaze FM capitalize on that if they were to bracket out into some sort of application for mobile devices or internet streaming?

Student 6: Absolutely, to agree with student 2, I think if we just stuck to 1 genre and or worked out a little extra cash and have several different stations for each genre that would appease more people. I know when I have gone on it, it has gone from 80s rock to 'what is this?' ha-ha, and you only get about 30 seconds of someone's attention before

they change the channel. You have to keep it to one thing, survey what people like, other wise you would have to do internet streaming to do different channels.

Other than music, students that were surveyed on other programming that they would enjoy, majority prefers sports or entertainment/celebrity news. Above local int. news and other programming. Do you agree with that? If so, or if not, why?

Student 8: I think it is a matter of opinions because, I'm really into sports and entertainment news, but just because the way society is now and days, its got my attention as far as local news, I think it depends on what is going on in the world and if we could relate to it.

Student 6: As far as entertainment and celebrity news, were not gonna go to college radio to figure out what that is, as far as news goes on a student radio, stay with local stuff, what's goin' on with the high schools, the alcohol sales on Sunday, stuff like that. That's what people want is what's going on in the city.

Student 2: I agree with student 8 & 6, we want to know what is happening and if it is relevant to us. I do enjoy the sports, entertainment and celebrity news, that's not relevant to me now, not today, I want to know this person might be running for mayor, or government, stuff like that.

That localness, would you feel that if Blaze FM were to offer local news, that would in some way would strengthen the community here on the college campus?

Student 4: I am in the news class and we already do campus news, with current events stuff and it is the matter of giving the view i mean its like its mtv versus a school run show, I mean I know in high school we had news in homeroom, and in college they

don't have that option. But if they had something like that for students to watch in the morning before class.

Student 10: It has to do with the personality on the radio. I'm a big personality person, you can talk about whatever you want to talk about, and if you have a good personality, ill listen to it, ill get interested in it, but the talk shows I listen to, I listen to various morning shows that are completely different but they have good personalities, and I'm intrigued with what they have to say. They could talk about the weather if they wanted to. If you have someone that is intriguing, then you would have more students that listen.

Is this a daily occurrence for you?

Student 10: It depends, when I commute it depends, I can find myself listening to this show one morning, or that show the next morning...

Student 8: It's true, I still listen to the radio and turn it off because the person doesn't have a good personality or can not deliver on what they are trying to say, and it will drive me crazy. You have to have some kind of personality that will make you stand out for me to listen the next day.

A previous study done in 2007 states that listeners of radio are mainly listening to seek out entertainment and information with gratifications ranging from relaxation, passing time, seeking specific content, and awareness. Would you agree with that? Or not? Why?

Student 10: I agree with that. When I drive in, that is what I do; it passes the time quickly, even on your iPhone, you just kind of zone out.

Student 8: Passing time really is... I mean I don't know, I don't really have a radio anymore, its like cd player, my computer where i will play my iTunes, but as far as I'm in a car, I love to listen to it in the mornings to wake me up a little bit.

What if blaze FM had an application for your mobile device, and you are able to stream blaze FM through that, would that be equivalent to help pass your time during the day.

Student 8: I definitely think so.

Student 2: When you say stream, is that like directly from what blaze FM is playing now or would it be kind of like Pandora?

It would be real time, what blaze FM was playing right then. Or in the area of podcasting where you would be able to download to your phone.

Student 2: That would allow for as far as content, if people are wanting to hear sports updates, or celebrity or local news, that is something they could go on and look for themselves, if its included in a 5 minute cap of those things, an advertisement for going online, that would be very beneficial.

Student 10: I think it would be beneficial to stream and having an app on your phone. The more ways you put the radio out there, the more you would have people listen to it.

Focus Group 2

40% of the students that I surveyed said that they sometimes listen to the radio. There was an even split between students who hardly listen to the radio, and mostly listen to the radio. What are some of the reasons why students sometimes listen to the radio today?

Student 7: For entertainment. I listen to the radio when I'm cleaning up in the morning or when I want to dance.

When you say that you listen to it in the morning is that a daily occurrence? Main time you listen to the radio?

Student 7: Yes. Right. That is when I'm in my room doing stuff.

Listening to the radio helps you start your day off, like a routine of yours?

Student 7: Yes. Exactly.

Students here at VSU prefer to listen to their mobile devices. 40% prefer their mobile devices. 37% prefer their computers via streaming through Pandora, etc. Only 10% say they listen to music on the radio? What is your opinion on this?

Student 9: I actually get annoyed with radio stations, because their is always advertisements, with Pandora its only 30 seconds, where as radio is like 20 minutes worth. Advertising is the main reason why people listen to their own devices or Pandora.

Student 5: I think with student 9, it's not just the advertisements, but with Pandora, it's more customizable. When I listen to the radio, I have to put up with all the talking, and advertising. With Pandora I can skip a song, or choose one specific artist.

65% of the respondents said they were unaware that VSU actually has a college radio station. Why do you think that is?

Student 9: There is not enough advertising for it. If I wasn't apart of the media program, I wouldn't have known about the station. My sister is not apart of the department, and she has no idea what Blaze FM. If there is any, it is not enough.

Student 3: I think because we haven't found the right target audience for our radio station to do well. This being a college campus and us being college students, if we knew how to bring people here and events here bring things that would target us, it is so easy already, because we are already here all in one place. Taking the personalities and knowing how to market them and knowing how they need to market to their audience to keep the attention of the audience.

In your opinion, what should serve as the main purpose of a college radio station? For example, more educational, informational, entertainment, or mixture?

Student 3: It should always be a mixture. We should keep the students involved with what's going on campus, with different organizations, what's going on with the city, because we are a college town but we are a city, people have lost touch with how big and how much potential this city really has especially on a national level. We are known as title town. Through ESPN there is no reason why we do not have or are able to provide the numbers or to do what it is that we should do with the students especially with all of the technology and all of the resources and the number of students that we have here.

Since the transmission signal is relatively low due to some power issues that blaze FM has, the signal only reaches campus wide. Would you consider Blaze FM a more viable option of interest if Internet streaming were available and possibly if blaze FM were to develop an app for mobile devices allowing streaming to mobile devices.

Student 1: That is an option that people need to look into. I've been to the website before and I think there are some audio clips on there, and I don't know if they have a streaming service, but I've looked at another campus's website and they had streaming service which made it a lot easier to click on everything to find out about

sports and what not. Because everyone is already connected to anything anyway, you know like their iPad's and stuff. I think the app thing would be beneficial but i think streaming on a browser would be the first step.

Student 9: To follow up with student 1 in grew up in Scranton PA, at my friends school they had online streaming and they were #1 for online college in that area. my school in Scranton we decided to go online, and we had people over seas like troops listening to it and made our ratings get higher. if they were to do online streaming, it would get more listeners.

Student 3: Anytime you do streaming, you give people the option and a chance to voice what they expect or want to hear or talk about, then they feel more comfortable tuning in because its more around them, it allows them to customize what it is that they want to receive and the information they want to hear.

Student 1: I was wondering if it was a possibility to have archives of different shows where some person has their show archived for a couple of weeks, so if someone wanted to listen to a certain type of music, they can say 'oh this is that show i like' and they could listen to that for a couple of hours.

I'm glad you brought that up, I was getting to that. With that, previously recorded shows or extra content, they classify those as podcasts, you can do podcasting. Interestingly enough, 53% of the respondents said they do not listen to podcasts. the point id like to bring up, you could have extra content, previously recorded shows, in case you missed it live you could go back on their website, download it as an mp3 and listen to it later. Do you think podcast would be a great idea for blaze FM to offer students? What would be the potential benefits for that?

Student 1: I think it allows for more customizability allows more people to be more active in the act of listening to the radio, they are able to choose, saying 'this is what i want to listen to' and it allows you to know what your audience wants when you look at this is what is being downloaded 50 times, and this is being downloaded 5 times, and you go ok this is what the students want more.

Student 3: It gives the students a sense of versatility because you can see what is doing well and what is not and then say a student tunes in and they catch the end of something that may not be appealing to them they still have that archive they can see and witness and download and can hear and it will give them a little more of a comeback to oppose to not liking that event and not ever returning.

Through podcasting, how can you put podcasting and education together to benefit students here at VSU? What are some of the possibilities with that?

Student 3: Personally one of my teachers who is a psych professor all of his lectures were podcasts. Every single one we had to read and it was on us to go and find it and listen to it whether we were in our car, at the pool out walking. It gives you that option that anytime you can be mobile with it you are going to win. You are giving people that option that chance, that choice to choose whatever they want whenever they want to.

In a previous study in 2007, listeners of radio were listening to radio for entertainment and information. With gratifications ranging from relaxation, passing time, seeking specific content, and awareness. Do you agree with any of those?

Student 3: Everybody loves to be entertained. If you are going to watch E True Hollywood, you are going turn to these stations, if you had someone at school that connected you, there is an event going on the front lawn and being able to turn around and find out what was happening in the press and as people we thrive off of that. We are always trying to keep up with what the next person is doing, we love to watch people climb but we love to watch people fall too. We thrive and we live for entertainment in the media, even if we learn from it. So being able to have that information, and keep everything together and it is here, how to make it better.

Focus Group 3

40% surveyed said they sometimes listen to the radio for music or entertainment. There was an even split between students who hardly (never/rarely) listen and mostly (a lot/ occasional). What are some reasons that students still listen to the radio today?

Student 12: When you are in the car, you press a button and voila! or when you have a your phone or whatever you have an app to listen to.

When you mentioned you listen to the radio in your car, what time is that usually?

Student 12: In the morning, and when I am going home in the evening or during lunch time.

Students here at VSU, 48% prefer to listen to music on mobile devices. 37% prefer computers via streaming, Pandora, etc. 10% listen to music on the radio. What are your opinions on this?

Student 12: I think that for the same reason, the same reason why you listen on your phone, you can walk around where ever you go, the radio you actually have to have it with you, or be in your car.

You don't see that too often, people with boom boxes any more.

Student 14: I think if iPod or iPhone had radio, we would like to listen to radio. We don't have the big boom box or radio thing, so we prefer to listen to iPod or iPhone which is more convenient.

Do you think that is something Blaze FM could offer students is internet streaming....

Student 11: I think that that is the way everything is going, everything is going to be over the internet, the cars now have Pandora radio in them, and obviously that is the future.

Student 13: I agree, I know that some of the people who are on blaze FM do stream live over the internet, but it is not very user friendly to listen on UStream, so it would be a lot more convenient if they could do it through the blaze FM site, that would be the way to go, to stream it online.

65% of the respondents said they were actually unaware that VSU had a student run station. Why do you think that is?

Student 13: I think it is because the reach of blaze FM is so limited. Most of the people who listen are those that work for the station or who have friends on the radio station. They are like 'oh I'm on live you should listen' and I think people liste4n then but only if they are on campus. The reach of blaze FM is so limited if that you are outside of campus it is almost impossible to hear.

Student 12: I think its because you are media major you are aware. If you are other majors, you probably do not have an idea because you do not see anything around about the radio station.

Student 11: I agree, I think a lot of it is not marketed. I do not see it any where on campus except in the media building.

Since the transmission signal is relatively low, and how it covers on campus, would you consider blaze FM a more viable option of interest if internet streaming and online applications were introduced that students could access that, and enjoy or listen to blaze FM through those options. Would you think blaze FM benefit from that?

Student 13: I do think so. I think that streaming online would open a whole new window of opportunities for blaze fm.

Only 53% respondents said they do not listen to podcasts. Do you agree with the statistic?

Student 11: I think I would agree. Because I don't listen to them. I don't think a lot of people know how to work it, because I don't know, ha-ha. we had to do it for a class one time, but I don't think people know what kind of service it offers, or how to access it.

Majority of students surveyed favored sports and entertainment/celebrity news in regards to other programming than music. Do you feel that blaze FM would benefit from offering this type of information, if not what other information could blaze FM offer?

Student 13: I think that it could be an option, I don't think it should be a continuous through out the day edition, but having a special show where it talks about celebrity news would be ok, but we should include international news, i know that some

of that format shows do discuss that but not often. If we could just add in general through out different times of the day these features, that would be good.

Through blaze FM's website, what are some social media techniques that blaze FM can incorporate in order to garner more listener ship or benefit from?

Student 13: Blaze FM has Facebook, and people do post on Facebook, almost all of the DJs have Facebook, where they post what's going on Facebook, other than twitter, I feel that blaze FM is doing a good job with using Facebook and being caught up in that.

Would any of you be interested in seeing blaze FM expand more featuring twitter, as in would you follow them on updates whether its on campus news?

All: Yea, yes.

Previous study in 2007 stated that radio listeners listen for entertainment, and information with gratifications that range from relaxation, passing time, seeking specific content, and awareness. Do you agree with those gratifications?

Student 13: Yea, I agree.

Are there any more gratifications you could get from seeking entertainment of information from listening to radio. in other words what do you get from listening to radio?

Student 13: Mine is mostly entertainment.

Student 12: Same. Mainly for entertainment.

APPENDIXC:

Institution Review Board Exemption