conception of this social world attempts to come to terms with the way capital, rather than being crippled by its contradictions and antagonisms, is dependent on them for its growth and innovation. The imagined social world that brands and bands co-construct is a political formation that creates the space within which the extraction of surplus value take place. At the political level it needs myths of responsible consumption. Partnerships between culture makers and brand builders take place within socio-political spaces, contexts and institutions that are the product of a struggle over what society should be like. These spaces are never finished and static; they are contingent and contradictory. The extraction of surplus value points to an asymmetrical sharing of power. Brands accrue value off the labor of cultural participants. The myth-making of musicians produces a popular culture that evades its contradictions.

Chapter Five

'Enjoy Responsibly!': Young People as Brand Co-creators

Young people and the work of brand building

Social brand-building activities raise an important question about the apparent paradox of mediated youth experience. At the same time branded social space promises romantic notions of empowerment, self-expression and authenticity, these spaces also instrumentally exploit this promise in order to engage young people in processes of commodification and surveillance. Young people have been objects of social, cultural and marketing thought since they were constructed as a distinct and powerful cultural group and market segment post-World War II. Youth culture (as we know it) and the youth market emerged simultaneously.

Rob Latham (2002) in his inventive analysis of consumption in youth culture argues that:

Youth culture can be profitably studied in terms of a dialectical exploitation and empowerment rooted in youth’s practices of consumption, practices that are enabled by and contained within specific technologies. (Latham, 2002, p. 4)

Similar to Latham's (2002) dialectical concept of youth in capitalist society, I too argue that young people are seen as a disruptive and problematic social group (they drink and take drugs, listen to loud music, have endless 'free' time, transgress social boundaries and disrupt public space) at the same time they are desired (popular culture is obsessed with youth). And, they are seen as both marginalized (they have no real access to the political and economic power of institutions and processes that impact on their lives) and preyed upon (corporations coolhunt their every move, seek to capture them as attentive audiences and valuable customers). The experience of young people is a product of contradictory forces. Being young is defined by the heady mix of feeling totally free and powerful at the same time that you feel fatally flawed and thwarted. Studies of young people and youth culture can all too easily romanticize, patronize, and exploit young
people and their social world. Studying young people and youth culture in the west is embedded within a lengthy tradition emanating from both the UK and the USA. My purpose here isn’t to rehearse the history of youth studies. It is to contribute to the wider field of youth studies by mapping out the vision for youth that brands construct.

I use the work young people undertake in building brands as a framework for thinking about youth culture. This work is an objectified form of unpaid social labor through which young people commodify their social experience, but at the same time they enjoy it and find it empowering. Terranova (2000, p. 34) describes the provision of 'free labor' as a ‘trait of the cultural economy at large’ that is ‘simultaneously enjoyed and exploited.’ Youth experience in a capitalist society is always-already commodified and therefore is always a form of value-creating labor (regardless of whatever other emotions, feelings and perceptions might be attributed to it).

Young people, from the moment they take up the social role of being a young person in a liberal democratic capitalist society, are value-generating subjects in a commodified culture. Smythe (1983) established how the audience is a commodity produced and sold by media organizations. Jhally (1990) takes up this concept by examining young people as a value-generating labor commodity—a commodity that freely gifts its labor and produces more value than it costs to produce. In *The Codes of Advertising* (1990, p. 121) Jhally argues that in the process of using media ‘consciousness becomes valorized’:

> There is this partial truth in the label which writers such as Smythe affix to the modern mass media—‘consciousness industry’—except that they have so far conceptualised it ‘upside down’; it is not characterised primarily by what it puts into you (messages) but by what it takes out (value).

Jhally illustrates why it is important not just to think about the ‘effects’ the media have on young people (e.g. how they influence what young people think, construct who they are, etc.), but to really get to the heart of the matter—the work they put in, the value they create, and how they are socially constructed into value-creating roles. In branded social space this value-creation is harnessed as brand-building activity. Corporations set out to apprehend the productive capacity of young people (not just to put meanings in their heads).

While the literature offers many frames for constructing and understanding the experience of young people, I take three reference points in capitalist society: youth culture is always-already commodified; young people are continually caught up in the performance of value-creating labor, and, these forms of labor are often mediated. Youth experience is constructed in the dialectical and contradictory structure of capitalist production. Young people are ‘exploited’ by it; they create surplus value for corporations; at the same time they invest in the culture with their identity and desires and extract enjoyment from it. They are ‘free’ only to alienate their cultural labor in the pursuit of enjoyment. Youth culture is filled with enjoyable freedoms that mask a lack of real freedom (Zizek, 1989), which makes it an ideal site for examining the ‘cultural logic of late capitalism’ (Jameson, 1991, 1998).

**Music goes live**

Young people produce the cultural content of brands. Alison Hearn (2006, 2008) in her analysis of the branded self describes the reflexive project of the self as a form of labor and source of value in the current mode of capitalist production. I begin here by examining the work young people do in branding themselves as part of HP’s Go Live branding program. The branded self is central to capital accumulation because it ‘effectively circulates cultural meanings’ (Hearn, 2008, p. 198). Young people, through their identity and culture-making practices, are ‘global value subjects’ (Hearn, 2008, p. 205). Constructing yourself as a value-creating subject by acquiring the right cultural capital and embodying brand value is key to feeling ‘empowered’ in the flexible capitalist economy. Work on the self is a kind of primitive accumulation that leads to further value-creating opportunities in the branded social world. In this social world subjectivity is productive:

> The practices of self-branding are clear evidence of the increasing cultural value, and potential surplus value, that is now extracted from the production of affect, desire, attention and image...subjectivity is central to the current mode of production. (Hearn, 2008, p. 215).

In the past five years corporations have engaged young people in content production by giving them access to the exclusive backstage of cultural production. Coca-Cola took young people backstage at Coke Live to interview bands. Nokia gave young people mobiles and sent them backstage at gigs to capture the atmosphere and chat with bands. They also sent them backstage at the ARIAs (Australian Grammy Awards) to interview bands and put the exclusive content
online. Multiple corporate partners have used their branding agreements with the Big Day Out to send young people backstage to interview bands and create content.

Corporations present these initiatives as socially responsible because they give young people the opportunity to develop content-making skills and expose cultural producers. These narratives of social responsibility obscure how the content young people produce is harnessed as valuable brand content that both gives the brand cultural substance and attracts an audience to branded websites.

For device manufacturers like Motorola, Nokia and HP these initiatives are also culturally instructive. The programs showcase the use of the cell phone (or mobile device) in everyday life. The experience and enjoyment of popular culture are naturally entwined with the production of brand content. The content produced serves as an educative workshop in the ‘democratization’ of media production. Mobile devices like cell phones make it possible for “anyone to be a reporter” provided of course that the corporation gives you the device, a backstage pass, and a media manager to get access to the bands. The young reporters both create brand content and the mythologies of being an empowered meaning maker within which contemporary brands thrive. The fun-filled experience of being a backstage reporter builds brand value and obscures the forms of immaterial labor everyday citizens perform in constructing corporate brands through their mediation of social life.

At the 2009 Big Day Out festival computer manufacturer HP set out to engage young people in the production of web 2.0 content. They ran an experiential branding program that set out to find a young music fan to be the official backstage reporter at the Big Day Out music festival. To enter, contestants had to make a video review of their favorite band and post it on YouTube. The immaterial value the Go Live contestants brought to their entries was their taste. The Go Live entries demonstrated how music fans produce themselves as commentators on cultural art, who take popular music as creative and authentic. In their entries, the contestants take the album seriously as a piece of art (rather than a commodity) and in doing so, structure popular music as authentic and meaningful. Eventual winner David Murray reviewed Birds of Tokyo by relating it to its genre and deducting its radio friendliness. Other contestants followed a similar logic. They offered their own intimate knowledge of the band and genre and skillfully placed the album in a web of meaning. They displayed their prowess with the accepted canon of popular music culture. They dep-

played cultural reference points (the band’s milieu, personal life, previous work, other significant bands in the genre) to provide a rationale for it as either good or bad taste. They performed labor in busily critiquing the produce of the culture industry as it is already critiqued for them (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1997). They judged the album from within the structure of the culture industry and offered this critical judgment and taste-making practice as brand content for HP.

The culture industry, more than ever, relies on the ‘avid participation’ of citizens and consumers. This avid participation is conventional and banal. It fits within pre-established frameworks of taste. The traditional hallmarks of the ideology of authenticity in the culture industry were repeatedly deployed by the reviewers. For instance reviewers remarked that, ‘they have clearly progressed as a band,’ ‘proved many wrong by showing they are not a one album phenomenon’ and ‘every album needs a ballad.’ Songs were described as ‘lush and majestic,’ songwriters as ‘amazing,’ ‘talented’ and ‘intense.’ For many of the bands ‘big things’ were coming. The reviewers gave their interpretations extra weight via discourses of conversion, ‘I wasn’t a fan at first, but now it’s endearing’ one reviewer reflected. Older musicians, like Neil Young, are portrayed as authentic ‘godfathers’ who are the ‘real deal’ because they influenced the canon of popular music. The video reviews are texts within which ideologies of taste, creativity and authenticity are constructed by audience members. The reviews are appropriated by HP as brand content. The first step to becoming a brand builder for HP is successfully branding your own self with cultural capital that HP wants to acquire. Acquiring and articulating musical taste is a kind of cultural labor that contestants perform in branding themselves as knowing subjects capable of transferring that knowledge to the corporate brand (Hearn, 2008).

Popular music and the culture industry are resilient because they manage to perform a duality that does not obliterate the ability of the commodity to generate value, on one hand, and the ability of the commodity to be taken as an authentic and meaningful object, on the other hand. Brands set out to perform this duality, of being both a strategic value-creating object and an authentic cultural resource.

HP wants to make a profit by building brand equity, and the young music fans want pleasure and satisfaction by being able to mediate music culture from within the exclusive backstage of a music festival. Branded social space is media-dense. It is a mediascape (Appadurai, 1990) fuelled by both the ‘desire for profit and the desire for consumer pleasure and satisfaction’ (Kenway and Bullen, 2008, p. 19).
Kenway and Bullen (2008) describe the mediascape as a libidinal economy that 'consists of social and market structures and dispositions that release, channel, and exploit desires and feelings.' Young people participate in popular music and brand-building in the pursuit of pleasure and enjoyment. In doing so, they make brands alluring, seductive and valuable.

The media-making practices of life lived in a branded and mediated social world are products of, and dependent on, the infrastructures of the media city (McQuire, 2008). The desire to build brands for pleasure, enjoyment and self-fulfillment is a product of life lived in a media-dense society. Young people who engage in the mediation of social life and popular music culture as part of Go Live and at the Big Day Out are engaged in pleasure-seeking and identity-making practices that simultaneously build brand value. They are flaneurs in the Benjaminian sense (Andrejevic, 2007a; Kenway and Bullen, 2008; McQuire, 2008), constructing their identity via their interaction with urban mediated space.

Harnessing unruly music fans

The brandscape is a productive space for brand-building partly because of its creative and unruly subjects. Music festival fans can deliver brand value, but they can also be fickle if the branded space is not smoothly integrated into their enjoyment of popular music. At the Big Day Out festival HP installed a Go Live pavilion with the headline ‘Let Your Creativity Go Live.’ The Go Live pavilion consisted of several computer terminals where people could upload content from cell phones and digital cameras to the web and social networking sites. Signs in the space encouraged music fans to ‘upload photos and clips from today or shoot your friends a quick update on all the action here at the Big Day Out.’ The Go Live installation attempted to harness the media-making practices of young music fans.

HP attempted to capture the creativity and unruliness of fans at the Big Day Out and direct them toward activities that build brand value. The promise of interactivity doesn’t always pay off. Taking time out of the Big Day Out to blog about it and upload photos of your experience impedes immediate enjoyment. Blogging and uploading photos happen once the festival is over. It is increasingly common for music fans to use cell phones to capture and immediately upload content from the music festival. This practice seamlessly fits with the immediate enjoyment of the festival because audience members can

An audience member uses a cell phone to capture an image of Neil Young performing live at the 2009 Big Day Out. Photo: Nicholas Carah.

Inside the HP Go Live installation a young guy, after entering all his personal details to register with HP, asked the promotional staff,
OK, so I’ve given you my info now what do you give me? The promotional staff member laughed and tried to play it cool. One of the staff showed me how to download my photos from my camera onto the HP system to edit, crop, adjust and upload them to my or HP’s social networking sites. As he was showing me how the system worked, he was distracted by two people using the gear in the next pod. It was only early in the day but they were already pretty drunk and had a few beers with them. As they were mucking around with the PCs, it began to look like they would spill beer all over the gear, so he had to leap away from me and gently move them away from the computers. It was a comical image of immediate enjoyment and corporate attempts to harness that enjoyment clashing. Harnessing enjoyment as brand value can be difficult.

Through the Go Live installation HP attempted to capitalize on young people’s enjoyment of live music events. Music events are media-dense social spaces, and young people enjoy music events via the continual mediation of them. The enjoyable gaze between audience and performer is frequently mediated by a cell phone or digital camera. Cameras bobbing around in the crowd are a key feature of the Big Day Out. After the event these images appear all over social networking sites. These media texts are a product of immaterial labor that in the first instance constructs the Big Day Out as a meaningful mediated cultural text and then helps to construct it as a mediated brandscape that connects the musical performance with the mediated social spaces of web 2.0. To capitalize on these media-making practices HP needed to construct a branding program that worked within this social context. Inviting the audience to take ‘time out’ from the music festival to mediate it missed the crucial aspect of mediation at live popular music events: it must be live and must be interwoven with the immediate enjoyment of the pop music performance. Rather than set up a separate pavilion HP would have been better off putting devices in the hands of young music fans and getting them to stream content live to the web.

The HP installation demonstrated how obvious and chunky brands can look when they ‘poke out.’ They work best when embedded within ‘natural’ cultural practices. Corporations and media agencies frequently claim that their brandscapes are ‘authentic’ whereas their competitors overdo it, soothe the audience and so on. Experiential branding experts caution that brands need to find authentic experiential relationships with music festival audiences. They espouse this as a fundamental creed of experiential branding. In selling their message their corporate clients though, they appear to miss the ways in which their branded installations really do stick out; everyone can see them, and everyone knows what they are doing. Few young people would sincerely agree with experiential marketers that their corporate clients’ brands really do love popular music. I would argue that what brands are really doing is reconstructing notions of authentic music culture within branded social space. Branded installations recreate ideas about what enjoyable popular music culture is. Whether they realize it or not, branding programs are strategically effective not because the audience takes them to be authentic, but because they construct the audience’s enjoyment of music culture in the first instance.

Going backstage

In addition to the installation at the Big Day Out festival HP sent a ‘citizen reporter’ backstage. David Murray joined the Big Day Out in every city of the tour. He was sent out to ‘interview bands and artists at the festival using his new HP HDX Premium Notebook PC and HP iPAQ912 Series Business Messenger.’ In the press, David, like the other entrants in Go Live, expressed a hope that winning the prize would be a ‘great boost to what I really hope is going to be my career.’

Go Live was an opportunity to ‘get a foot in the door of an industry which can be pretty hard to break into.’ David’s first blog from the Gold Coast Big Day Out captured his excitement at being a backstage reporter:

Wow! What a day and its not even over yet! Met and interviewed Fuzzy from Video Hits this morning. She was absolutely awesome and gave me a bunch of pointers on my presenting...Man, was I nervous before (my interview with Sneaky Sound System) but it all went great! The whole band was heaps funny and kept talking over each other.

His reports, blogs, tweets on Twitter, and YouTube videos were uploaded on HP’s Go Live website. Through the Go Live website Big Day Out audiences could log on to view videos David shot backstage at the Big Day Out, see how they could also use these devices in their own cultural practice, and view HP products and promotional material.

David mobilized the HP brand. As he moved about backstage at the Big Day Out and interviewed bands he took the brand places that advertising executives and marketing managers can’t access. He brought his cultural capital, knowing cool from uncool, and his reper-
toire for describing popular culture, to the HP brand. For instance, on the blog he said, ‘for those of you who don’t know (and seriously if this is the case you’d have to have been buried in a snow drift somewhere in Antarctica for the last 3 years), Sleazy Sound System are a dance-pop...’ Most of the HP executives and shareholders wouldn’t know who Sleazy Sound System are. Go Live built brand equity off the fact that David knew. He undertook valuable immaterial labor for HP.

David is emblematic of much of the media production that takes place on web 2.0. Participants perform immaterial labor and create brand content by commentators of popular culture, by offering their knowledge and cultural discourse to the brand. HP wants young music fans to ‘let their creativity go live.’ Being creative is part of the ideology of the authentic self (Botterill, 2007). The brand sets out to capture these projects of the authentic self and transform them into capital value.

For Go Live to be an effective branding program, it needed to deliver on the creative promise of interactivity. David needed to tweet from mosh-pits, send live photos from the side of the stage, upload blogs each day and deliver short, snappy videos straight after each Big Day Out stop. Unfortunately for HP, the content was slow to arrive on the Go Live site. David tweeted and blogged infrequently, and the videos were hampered by poor sound and vision. In the week following the Big Day Out David’s interviews attracted between 50 and 100 views on YouTube. This isn’t a significant number of views when compared with other fan-generated media from the Big Day Out. A poor-quality video filmed on a cell phone of the Pendulum circle pit (a group of people who run and dance wildly in a fast-moving circle, frequently pushing people in and out of the circle) scored over 10,000 hits in the same time frame. One of the Go Live contest winners who frequently uploaded content she made at live music events to YouTube told me that, ‘after I go to gigs I love going onto YouTube and checking them out later on. Just for the memories. I just upload (my videos) for other people.’ David’s videos were most successful when they captured the raw energy of a young music fan and least successful when they attempted to be real professional videos. The audience for online media texts searches out the real and raw mediation of the music festival.

One of the challenges of critically examining experiential branding is that there is little publicly available empirical research that compares it to other brand-building practices. The corporations I spoke with commonly attest that experiential branding programs increase

the target market’s brand awareness, association of the brand with popular music and sales in key segments. A program like Go Live appeared contrived to both musicians and music fans because the mediated content it generated and practices it fostered were not seamlessly integrated into cultural practice. The program didn’t harness the ways in which young music fans mediate their enjoyment of pop music events. While user-generated content from the Big Day Out appeared all over social networking sites following the festival, HP didn’t effectively manage to embed itself within these media-making practices.

Brands can look hopelessly immobile when they aren’t reflexively integrated into cultural practice. When David asked Children Collide whose idea it was to have a scratch-it on the front cover of their album one of the band members replied, ‘It was actually me. I’m a marketing genius, so if HP needs to flog any ink jets or dot matrixes, let me know.’ The band members poked fun at the brand, and just like the physical Go Live installation, again the brand was caught ‘sticking out.’ The execution of the Go Live program demonstrated how the brand’s dependence on the ‘autonomous’ cultural action of cultural participants is a fraught process. While HP relies on their natural cultural actions to construct the brand, these actions can drive the brand in unspecified directions.

Brands accrue value from popular culture by appearing ‘disinterested’ (Holt, 2002). To appear disinterested they have to turn aspects of brand production over to cultural agents who might not always have the brand’s strategic interests at heart. Experiential branding is most strategically effective when it carefully constructs the spaces within which the cultural action will unfold in order to integrate with cultural practices. Despite its claims to successfully ‘coolhunting’ styles and trends and naturally partnering with musicians and young people as peer leaders, experiential branding is really most successful when it constructs and facilitates the social spaces within which brand-building activity happens. Experiential brand-building isn’t about benignly, authentically and ethically partnering with social life ‘as it is,’ but is about constructing social spaces and forms of social life that are inherently about brand-building.

A brand-building branded self

Like most of the Go Live entrants David hoped that it would prove to be his ‘big break’ into the industry. To many of the entrants being a
reporter backstage at a music festival was a key signifier of the authentic self. The backstage is the exclusive 'real' space of cultural production. One of the contestants told me:

I wanted the shot at the major prize because I thought hey if I'm in the VIP section, I'd maybe have a chance at meeting the inside people as in maybe people who actually work for the labels or the bands and artists, or maybe meeting promoters or publicists...and yeah I'm hoping to make it in the music industry, maybe working for a marketing company or being a PR for some record label.

The commenting subjects of web 2.0 form themselves under a commercial logic. Go Live takes this idea of the authentic self and embeds it within the brandscapes. David introduced himself on the HP Go Live blog by stating how 'unbelievably stoked' he is to win Go Live because 'over the last few years I've been working pretty hard to break into television as a presenter and this may be the foot in the door I need.'

The contestants didn't offer their creativity and knowledge of popular culture to HP just for the fun of it. They entered Go Live for strategic reasons. They expressed a desire to work in the media and music industry. Several were already involved in some way in their own media and musical projects. For instance, they were in bands, studying media, working in community media, or ran their own YouTube channels. They were media makers, musicians, citizen journalists, and bloggers. HP attempted to tap into the media practice of adopter-elite in order to harness their creative energy as brand content. The contestants had strategic motives of their own; they hoped that by entering the HP contest it would give them a break into the media industry. These aspirational audience members dreamt of jobs making media content. The global culture industry is increasingly built on flexible and unpaid labor that produces content, while the paid jobs within the culture industry are to facilitate social space (Deuze, 2007; Louw, 2001). As informally networked audiences produce the content, the professionals increasingly produce the social spaces that harness and valorize that content.

The contestants saw Go Live as an opportunity to develop a portfolio and perhaps to 'make it' in the creative industries. Go Live looked like a way of 'getting into' the TV and music industries. One contestant told me that:

Competitions like HP Go Live are a great way of getting experience in a pretty difficult industry to break into. I entered because I'm working to become a presenter and anything that helps me achieve that is worthwhile.

Contestants networked with friends who had skills in cinematography and production to develop their entries and mostly spent a day or so planning, shooting and editing the video. They impressed on me that the reasons for entering Go Live were for the real career opportunity (a deep and authentic reason), not for a flippant desire for fifteen minutes of fame:

I think it is a brilliant opportunity for people, good on them for giving us that chance to get our faces on TV. But that's just it, the majority of the population just want their 15 minutes of fame and that's it. I mean it's all about being famous these days, and I am a total hypocrite now because I used to be like that, but now I want television and radio to be my career, I want to be known by people but not be famous.

The entrants recognized that HP ran Go Live for strategic reasons. And so they positioned their relationship with HP as a strategic partnership. One contestant said that HP ran Go Live to promote their business and reach out to the people so they can voice their passion about music. The universal language of today is music and so it's a clever strategy to use the Big Day Out concerts to attract mass audiences.

While another added that:

HP wouldn't just start this competition simply for the greater good, it has to give them something as well...The Big Day Out is a massive national tour which sells out every year. It is the perfect opportunity for a massive corporation to flog its latest line of products to the intoxicated and impressionable youth of the country.

With these strategic goals clearly in focus, the contestants were happy to participate and keen to demonstrate how they could be of strategic value to HP.

Of course, this strategic mindset was also deployed in cynical critiques of the brand. One contestant suggested that corporate sponsorship and the Big Day Out fitted together because the festival was a mainstream commercial venture. The Big Day Out didn't book bands that attracted audiences who were 'angry people who hate popular
culture and that kind of corporate bullying.' This contestant just entered the competition because he had bought a HP phone which was 'absolutely terrible' and he hoped to 'get something back from them.' He suggested that the eventual winner was innately conservative and selected because the corporation could tell he would support the brand values and wouldn't try to do anything subversive. The experiential branding program ultimately has to be filled in with banal pedestrian content; otherwise it could take on a political life of its own (like other public spaces). Corporations search for the right cultural capital in terms of knowledge of popular culture as well as the right political disposition.

Branded selves are frequently cynical because participants implicitly realize their identity work is an exercise in value creation. We are 'global value subjects' conditioned by global flexible capital (Hearn, 2008, p. 214). Disenchantment and cynicism are products of flexible accumulation. As we constantly adapt and change, we start to feel that there are 'no longer any identity systems worth believing in' (Hearn, 2008, p. 214).

David's final Go Live post was a tutorial on how to interview bands and upload the content to the web. He offered tips on doing research, writing questions and editing interviews. Throughout his tutorial he emphasized a do-it-yourself, citizen-driven, enthusiasm for media-making. He also took the opportunity to integrate HP into his media-making practice. When doing research the first thing he did was 'jump on his brand spanking new HP laptop,' he said with a wink to the camera. And then he transferred his questions onto his HP iPAD that the guys at HP gave me...it's really really cool because I can tap around on this and all my questions come up...and I don't have to carry around a piece of paper. Great stuff!

He finished the video by saying, 'Upload it to the net, share it with the world and wait for the job offers to come in. Speaking of job offers...any minute now...hasn't Channel V got back to me yet?' It was a joke. But, it was one of those jokes that pointed directly to a prickly truth. David and his fellow Go Live contestants really do want a 'real' job in music television, and even though they dare to dream it might come true, they 'know' it probably won't. HP builds their brand off this desire. The young contestants who want a media career so badly are prepared to labor for free for the brand in the hope of 'making it big.'
sertion that ‘anybody’ can produce content for the web needs to be considered with regard to the political economy of the web. Matthew Hindman (2009) in _The Myth of Digital Democracy_ offers a defining empirical study of the structure, traffic flows and audiences on the web. He raises two key issues that are paramount when thinking about how empowered citizen making makers are relative to the global culture industry. First, the infrastructure of the web is such that major portals shape traffic flows through their link and search structure. And second, owing to this structure there is a profound difference between speaking and being heard. Elites and their messages are still the prevalent authoritative voices.

While the web might be full of ‘ordinary’ meaning makers, they are fundamentally making meaning within a spatial architecture and controlled by elite interests. In the case of HP’s Go Live David was given space within which he had to build the HP brand. Those who own and control these spaces strategically shape them toward their political and economic ends. Whatever creativity that might transpire online, we must remind ourselves that it transpires within a context where powerful groups, means of communication and messages are closely interrelated (Deuze, 2007; Hindman, 2009; Louw, 2001).

Experiential branding is a symptom of this reshaping of the culture industry, replete with its narratives and mythologies of empowerment. Meaning makers in experiential branding programs might have a computer and something to say; however, whatever they say is said in the context of building the corporate brand. And their audience and impact are relative to their position within this communicative architecture. There is a profound difference between ‘speaking and being heard’ (Hindman, 2009). That difference is shaped first and foremost by the architecture of the culture industry and its social spaces like web 2.0.

The experience of ‘going backstage’ into the ‘real world’ of cultural production makes these participants want to get more involved. The effort they put into brand-building is of no real concern. They don’t see these activities as commodifying or changing popular music culture. They see the brands as making a positive investment in the culture at large and in helping them out as individuals to achieve their dreams of being an integral part of cultural production. When I asked one participant if they felt they played a role in building the brand they replied, ‘I hope so. If I didn’t I didn’t really achieve what I was there for.’ The brand-building labor is an unquestioned part of the

real. It is something they have to do to get access to the cultural backstage. The communication agencies that run the experiential branding programs and liaise with musicians and young music fans ever emphasize the brand-building strategy behind the program. While the participants recognize that they are contributing to brand-building, they are often pleasantly surprised when they realize that they don’t have to overtly engage in endorsing the brand.

Manufacturing authenticity

The work of people in the cultural industries—musicians, media makers and music fans—is intrinsic to the development of brands that people take to be authentic. Marketers and the participants in their branding programs assert that corporations enable and empower people to actualize their desires and dreams by investing in cultural space and opening up spaces of cultural production previously only available to the elite. Marketers claim that enabling ‘natural’ cultural production leads to the development of inherently ethical brands. Most participants recognize that these corporate programs are ultimately about building valuable brands and that their role is to contribute to brand value. The more apparent their role in brand-building, the more concerned they are about the social consequences of these programs and the merit of the rhetorical ethical claims corporations make. The brand-building programs often reflexively respond to these queries. The brandscape offers discursive space within which these concerns can be raised and neutralized. Within the brandscape participants are free to criticize brands as long as they don’t criticize branding. Criticism is always directed at a particular brand rather than the universal logic of branding. As such, the brandscape appears free, open and autonomous.

Culture industry practitioners play a key role in shifting marketing from being a ‘distinct business activity’ to an ‘embedded cultural practice’ (Firat and Dholakia, 2006, p. 126). An embedded cultural practice of marketing is collaborative, diffused and complex compared to the traditional centralized and ordered management approach. Contemporary marketers hold the perception that the practice of co-production in marketing empowers consumers. Marketers argue that marketing is moving from a ‘consumer satisfaction’ to a ‘consumer empowerment’ oriented practice (Firat and Dholakia, 2006; Vargo and Lusch, 2004). A repositioning of marketing language is taking place, moving from the tactical post-war language of marketing manage-
ment (target, segment, action, and tactics (Kitchen, 2008)) to inclusive and ethically sensitive language. Words like participation, empowerment, mutual, experience, creativity, and responsibility attempt to signal that the consumer is not being 'actioned' by marketers but rather is an integral part of the 'action.' This discourse signals a new populism, where inclusive and participatory language obscures the power structures inherent in capitalist society and culture.

Marketing theorists adapt cultural, postmodern, and critical cultural theories eclectically. The intent appears in part to distance marketing from 'modernism' and re-embed it in a savvy contemporary space where it can be rendered more 'ethical' and 'socially responsible.' Firtat and Venkatesh (1995, p. 240) demonstrate these contemporary discourses in marketing theory:

Modernism has failed in its quest for an ethically ordered, rationally constructed, technologically oriented, seemingly progressive and relentlessly unifying social order. The modernist project has rendered the consumer a reluctant participant in a rational economic system that affords no emotional, symbolic, or spiritual relief to the consumer (Angus, 1989). In essence, modernism has marginalized the 'lifeworld' (Habermas, 1984). The postmodernist question therefore is to 're-enchant human life' and to liberate the consumer from a repressive rational/technological scheme.

Firtat and Venkatesh position themselves as 'laboratory postmodernists,' a perspective where individuals can be 'liberated' and 'empowered' within (and due to) the capitalist system by being consumers (Arvidsson, 2005; Holt, 2002). Not all (in fact, very few) marketers are self-declared 'postmodernists,' but many espouse different versions of this 'empowerment' rhetoric.

These discourses can be observed in the culture industry participants who legitimate their involvement in the production of strategic landscapes by deploying the contemporary ethical discourses of corporations. Marketing theorists assert that these partnerships between corporations, cultural industry practitioners and consumers create forms of communication which actualize the 'mutual construction of symbolic meanings, a process of partnership between marketers and the consumer' (Firtat and Dholakia, 2006, p. 146). Contrary to the claims of marketing theorists, media theorists like Deuze (2007) and Low (2001) articulate how the construction of symbolic meaning takes place within social space facilitated by marketers and the culture industry. Marketers shape social spaces that serve their strategic aims. A critical response to marketers is to examine the way these partnerships embody what Goldman and Papson (2006) describe as the process of capital branding itself. They echo Adorno's (1991, p. 81) argument that mass culture is a 'system of signals, signalling itself.'

Marketers create a new ethical language in partnership with culture makers like musicians. As they do this, discussions about the role of corporations in cultural life are framed in ways conducive to brand-building. For instance, those that we might intuitively assume would critique or question brands and the role of corporations in social space (for instance, the authentic 'artists' (Botterill, 2007)) learn to speak a language that reinforces marketing. Bands, instead of speaking out about the broader social impact of alcohol brands or soft drink brands in musical festivals, venues and the industry, praise their 'investment' in local culture. The discourses they use to authenticate and legitimize their own cultural subjectivity, by necessity, also reinforce capital.

Musicians and music fans are engaged in forms of cultural action which appear to encompass both autonomous and authentic identity work alongside the production of cultural spaces with capital value. They provide the unpaid labor and cultural capital to make these programs authentic and successful. Using Bourdieu (1984), Regev (2002, p. 252) examines popular music in the context of late modernity, where collective cultural participants struggle for status and legitimacy. In this analysis popular music is a 'cultural tool, used by these rising collective entities and identities, to define their sense of cultural uniqueness and difference.' Popular music culture is a process through which cultural capital is established or acquired, and forms of distinction are enacted through cultural practice (see also Lury, 1996). The participants I interviewed advocate for the corporate investment in local cultural spaces and claim to recognize that capital value is being created through these programs. In all except a few instances, however, they do not perceive that the strategic interest of the corporation may reconfigure the cultural space. To the participants, the cultural space retains its autonomy and 'authenticity.'
Chapter 3: ‘I Pushed My Way to the Front With Every Band I saw’

1 The Coke Live website is similar to several other corporate websites in the past few years. For instance, pop bands recorded mobile blogs on Nokia cell phones for the Nokia Music Goes Mobile website; Toyota used interactive DJ software to have people record mixes online; Jagermeister launched an online community for indie musicians; Jack Daniel’s ran live music awards; HP established a citizen-reporter blog linked to the Big Day Out music festival.

2 The interviews were conducted while participants used the Coke Live site. The interviews were semi-structured and went for approximately 1 hour. The interview participants were 17 or 18 years of age, 3 females and 2 males.

3 Reference to research young people and media literacy online.

4 Over a three-month period I collected over 250 posts on the MySpace pages of bands playing the Coke Live tour. Of these 250 posts, over 180 related to Coke Live. Over 180 posts from band MySpace pages were used. MySpace (http://myspace.com) is a social networking site. Examples of bands’ MySpace sites examined in this analysis include The Veronicas at mspace.com/theveronicas, Evermore at myspace.com/everymore and After The Fall at myspace.com/afterthefallaustralia. No individual MySpaces were analyzed; only posts to the public pages of the bands and brands were analyzed.

Chapter 4: ‘We Are Not Here to Endorse Products’...

1 Worship the Glitch accessible at http://worshiptheglitch.com/2006/08/mike-patton-tells-it-like-it-is.html

2 A 360 deal (also known as a multiple rights deal) is a deal between musicians and record companies that extends the recording companies’ rights beyond the musical recording. The record company also takes an interest in any earnings the band makes from touring, merchandise, brand deals and other applications of their music, performances, images or personality. In the most comprehensive 360 degree deals, the recording company owns an interest in nearly any source of revenue the artist generates. Record companies feel that if they invest in making the band a valuable commodity, then they should have access to all the revenue the band generates beyond the recording. Live Nation has led the industry in 360 deals, signing Madonna, Jay Z and U2. Live Nation was not a record company, but held interests in live music venues; they are signing artists so that they can get access to the revenue they generate beyond their live performance, major record companies have now embraced this kind of deal. Labels sell the deal to artists with the assertion that a 360 deal represents a comprehensive investment in the artist to generate revenue from multiple sources rather than just an investment in their recordings.

3 Clinton Walker speaking at the Pig City Symposium, University of Queensland, 13 July 2007.

Chapter 5: ‘Enjoy Responsibly’

1 My approach to youth culture is defined by some of the following scholars and concepts. The emergence of interpretive and critical approaches to youth culture post-World War II led to a conceptualization of youth that was ambiguous and referenced to social practices and spaces rather than ‘age’ (Butcher and Thomas, 2003; Campbell, 2004; Frith, 1992). Academic approaches to youth culture are often preoccupied with identifying young people with (or organizing them into) ‘subcultural’ groups, and criticisms of the subcultural approach have reorganized them into ‘scenes’ and ‘tribes’ (Hesmondhalgh, 2005) offers an account of these formations. Young people are often seen as ‘isolated’ and ‘othered’ from the public spaces and political and economic processes that impact on their lives (Campbell, 2004; Gelder and Thornton, 1997; Hebdige, 1979; Kearney, 1997; Polhemus, 1997; Solomon, 2003; Willis, 1977). This conceptualization of young people as isolated, isolated living in subcultural spaces has led to varied interpretations and accounts. Some perspectives celebrate the creativity and agency of young people as meaning makers who creatively engage with social space to create their own resistant identities. Other perspectives are concerned with public policy to engage young people more effectively in economic and political processes. Young people are problematic for public policy, public spaces and increasingly for contested private-public spaces like shopping centres and malls (Butcher & Thomas, 2003; Fine and Weis, 1998; Goodman and Saltman, 2002; Kassim, 2003; Kenway and Bullen, 2001; Lankshear and Knobel, 2003; McLeod & Malone, 2000; Morris, 2004; White, 1993, 1999). Young people are not just problematic for policy makers, they are also a source of value for corporations, they are ‘preyed upon’ and their social world is commodified (Doeherty, 2002; Klein, 2000; Saltman, 2000; Saltman and Gabbard, 2003). Developing since the mid-twentieth century youth culture has been characterized by the ongoing process of ‘mediation.’ Young people increasingly live their lives in mediated social space (Haenfler, 2006; Klein, 2000; Lulander, 2003; Polhemus, 1997; Stern, 2007; Sternberg, 2007; Williams, 2006).

2 The Big Day Out is similar to a festival like Lollapalooza in the US. Lollapalooza, like the Big Day Out, also commodifies its audience by selling media rights to the festival space and developing experiential co-branding programs with corporate partners. Both festivals are keen to assert that their audience offers a unique value proposition for corporate partners. The 2008 Lollapalooza recap (a record of the festival for sponsors and advertisers) articulates the
heritage and history of the festival, its musical credentials, and the environmental and social initiatives it supports. Most significantly though, the recap details the size and shape of its audience. The festival describes their audience as a ‘quarter-million fans that don’t bleed into the crowd’ (offering a unique value proposition for brands) and lists their gender, education, age, income and residence. In addition to detailing the value of their audience commodity, they demonstrate the media content the festival generates: ‘2.3 billion media impressions were purchased, traded for, or earned across sprint, broadcast, online and out-of-home.’ This included their co-branding activities with corporate partners. Lollapalooza demonstrates how the festival both constructs a valuable audience and has the capacity to communicate with that audience beyond the festival through multiple media channels and social spaces including the sought-after social networking spaces of web 2.0. Music festivals, like traditional media businesses, produce audiences for sale (Smythe, 1981). The advantage they have over the traditional media business is a capacity to integrate multiple media channels and social spaces around the enjoyment of popular music culture. Moving beyond traditional sponsorship of cultural event, experiential branding undertakes a managed interaction between corporations and the festival audience.

These claims are frequently made in the press and in press releases from corporations. Cummings (2008, p. 680) notes that media agencies like Peer Group Media ‘point out that the festival does not accept sponsorship deals from just anyone...festival goers have to see the value from the brand, rather than it just being parasitic to the event.’ Media agencies are keen to assert that they make a positive and worthwhile contribution to cultural space, and this is how they create brand value. The narrative has a political dimension. That is, the brand doesn’t just poach or co-opt cultural space, but rather, it contributes to a mutual exchange in value.


Cummings (2008, p. 682) records a similar experience with a local band at the Big Day Out who played the V Energy Drink Local Produce stage. As part of playing the festival the band were ‘required’ to attend a signing in a V branded tent where audience members were encouraged to have V merchandise signed by the band. The band didn’t want to do it, but it was part of their agreement. So the band wrote things like ‘Don’t drink this stuff, it’ll kill you’ on the V branded merchandise that they gave to the young fans. Here, the band ‘overdo’ the interaction with the festival space and are caught ‘sticking out.’ In these situations the band appears to be gaining awareness and recall but perhaps losing positive attitude and value from its target market. Cummings (2008) claims that these moments are ‘not successful’ for the bands; I would argue that the interactions going on here are more complex. The brand does look out of place, but it is still a fundamental part of the action, and the band members take on the brand on an unscripted and rebellious adventure, which in a contradictory fashion may well add value to the brand. It is too

simplistic to suggest that mere criticism of brands by opinion makers like popular musicians necessarily decreases their value. I encountered another instance of this at the Jack Daniel’s JD Set where musician Tim Rogers claimed that Jack Daniel’s had ruined his marriage. This stunning and tragic criticism of the product arguably delivered more ‘authentic’ value to Jack Daniel’s. Goldman and Papson (1999) suggest that even advertisements that garner negative reactions can still stir debate and create value for brands.

Following the Big Day Out I interviewed via email six participants in HP’s Go Live.

Chapter 6: ‘I’m Here to Party’

1 Corporate claims to authenticity and particular social values are met with demands from consumers and activists to evidence how they ‘live out’ these claims. In particular, this has led to a desire to see the ‘real backstage’ of brand and commodity production. For instance, consumers were not satisfied with the authenticity of Nike’s ‘Just Do It’ philosophy when they discovered the production of Nike commodities rested on the exploitation of labor on the fringes of the global economy (Harvey, 2000). Ultimately, capital accumulation rests on an asymmetric accumulation of value from human labor and the natural environment (Harvey, 2000). Postmodern brand narratives sought over this asymmetry, their value rests on the extent to which they can present narratives that consumers find useful in their meaning- and identity-making practices. Brands attempt to implicate consumers in identity-making projects where they attain political empowerment through branding. While Holt (2002) laments that identity-making work in this intense symbolic economy is too taxing for time-poor consumers, the more fundamental issue it raises, I argue, is the amount of branding as a communicative logic for social and political life.

2 While in this chapter I focus on narratives of social responsibility at the Vivid festival, these narratives are evident at other music festivals. For instance, at the Big Day Out many brands undertake a savvy ‘duty of care’ to the audience. The Big Day Out is held in the middle of the Australian summer. It is a very hot day out. Many fans overdo it with the combination of crowds, heat, alcohol and drugs. The brands are there to help out through. Lipton had athletic men wearing large Lipton branded tanks on their backs move through the crowd distributing ice tea to audience members via a large hose. Duracell, a global battery brand, erected large battery-shaped water tanks on sit where patrons could fill specially distributed Duracell water bottles for free. The Big Day Out has a duty of care to distribute water to their audience. The Duracell water tank was a way of turning that duty of care into a brand experience. Duracell claimed that the water kept the audience ‘powering through the day,’ just like Duracell batteries. Around these Duracell space promotional models dressed as the Duracell bunny played and joked around with audience members and sprayed them with water guns. The brand characters fit in with the cacophony of costumes people wear to the Big Da