Back room dealers and the great kiwi battler: a study of advertising frames in the 1993 and 2011 New Zealand electoral referenda

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Nicola Jane Treloar

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Abstract

In 1993 and 2011, New Zealanders were presented with the choice of retaining their current electoral system or changing to a different system through a national referendum. The result of the 1993 referendum was a dramatic change which saw New Zealand shift to a mixed-member proportional representation system, after 73 years of elections under the simple plurality first-past-the-post system. Eighteen years later, in the 2011 referendum, New Zealand chose to retain this system.

This research explores the information regarding the potential impacts of a change in electoral system that was presented in advertising campaigns run by key lobby groups during the 1993 and 2011 referenda. Drawing on theories of the democratic role of the media, political advertising, and framing theory, this research considers how advertising, as part of the broader media landscape, framed the discussion of the issues surrounding the choice of electoral systems in the 1993 and 2011 New Zealand electoral referenda.

Using an inductive approach to content analysis, the research developed a set of quantitative data on the themes within the advertising campaigns. Content analysis highlighted the priority issues in each campaign.

Drawing on framing effects and semiotic theory, these themes were then considered within their wider context to assess what the data suggests about the quality, tone and breadth of discussion about the two electoral systems. It was found that the campaigns used specific frames to differentiate the campaigns on a social and ideological level. Advertising drew on social myths to characterise the decision as a battle between big business and the 'everyday New Zealander' in the mixed-member proportional campaigns, and between a system that held politicians accountable and one that was bound by bureacracy in the campaigns that stood against the mixed-member proportional system.

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Guide to acronyms used

CBG   Campaign for Better Government, a pro-FPP lobby group from the 1993 referendum.

CKM   Campaign for MMP, a pro-MMP lobby group from the 2011 referendum.

ERC   Electoral Reform Coalition, a pro-MMP lobby group from the 1993 referendum.

FPP   First-past-the-post, the electoral system of New Zealand from 1853 until 1993 (excluding a brief period between 1908 and 1913 where elections were held under a second-ballot system).

MMP   Mixed-member proportional, the electoral system of New Zealand from 1993 to present.

VFC   Vote for Change, a pro-change lobby group from the 2011 referendum.

Prologue

"...anger, betrayal, ineptitude, and two referendums..."

An environment for change

The loss of guaranteed access to New Zealand's largest export market that came with Britain's entry into the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973 was the start of many shocks to the New Zealand economy that saw the economic stability of the post-war period replaced with a period of prolonged economic stagnation and instability. New Zealand's golden days of an agriculture-based economy with high growth and high gross domestic product (GDP) per capita were left battered by the 1973 oil crisis and the collapse of the global commodity boom.

This was not unique to New Zealand. From 1973 the world economy "struggled with consequences of low growth, rising unemployment, accelerating inflation, expanding budget deficits, deteriorating balance of payments, unstable exchange rates, diminishing company profitability, and a rising volume of national and international debt" (Foley, as cited in Roper, 2005, p. 3).

But the effect in New Zealand was more severe. "There are very few countries, certainly among high income economies [such as New Zealand], which have suffered from a combination of the effect of an oil shock plus a chronically weakening market situation for major traditional exports" (Gould, 1985, as cited in Roper, 1993, pp. 4-5).

The interventions of the Third National Government, led by the authoritarian Prime Minister (and Minister of Finance) Robert Muldoon, failed to reverse the economic decline. With the election of the Fourth Labour Government in 1984, New Zealand economic policy took a sudden change in direction. Aided by the unicameral system and an electoral system which favoured majority governments, the Government began a period of structural adjustment, rapidly shifting the economy from a Keynesian-based managed economy to a free-market economy based on monetarist

and neoliberal[1] economic theory. It is said by some that New Zealand took to neoliberal free-market economic policy with a devotion even its founder, Milton Friedman, would have been surprised by (Barry, 1996).

The breadth, pace, and impact of the reforms created widespread public anger and disillusion with the government and with the parliamentary process (Aimer & Miller, 2002a). Many saw the reforms as a series of unwelcome changes pushed "on an unwilling public" (Mulgan, 1997, p. 267). The dominance of the two major parties in the legislature, enabled by the first-past-the-post (FPP) electoral system[2] was considered to be one of the reasons that the reforms could be pushed through despite widespread public dissatisfaction (Kelsey, 1997; Mulgan, 1997; Roper, 2005)[3].

This anger and disillusionment was further compounded by a series of contentious election outcomes occurring over the same time period. The dominance of Cabinet within Parliament, and 'disproportionate' electoral results such as the National Party forming the government in 1978 and 1981 despite the Labour Party receiving a larger share of the overall votes (Lamare & Vowles, 1996; Levine & Roberts, 1993a), highlighted a growing concern among the New Zealand public regarding the performance of the electoral system (New Zealand Electoral Commission, n.d.). In response to this, the Labour Party pledged during the 1981 and 1987 election campaigns to set up a Royal Commission to report on a wide range of matters regarding the electoral system.

Upon the formation of the 4th Labour Government in 1984, the Royal Commission was established. In 1986, the Royal Commission reported on its findings, which recommended a fundamental change to New Zealand's electoral system: to change the electoral system from FPP to the German-style mixed-member proportional

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[1] The term 'neoliberal' was originally used as a term to describe the Mont Pelerin Society's project to create new liberal theories based on the idea of a free economy and a strong state. While recognising this alternative definition and the continuing difficulties in defining the concept of 'neoliberalism', I have chosen to use the term to refer to the economic theory behind the neoclassical reforms of the 1970s (Hartwich, 2009; Thorsen & Lie, 2006; Williamson, 2008).

[2] It is argued that FPP favours tactical voting, whether voters select a candidate they think is more likely to win, rather than their preferred candidate to avoid "wasting" their vote. This, in turn, results in the FPP system favouring a two-party system, which increases the likelihood that a single party will hold a majority of seats in the legislature. This situation is referred to as Duverger's law (Riker, 1982).

[3] This was also likely to have been compounded by the fusion of legislative and executive powers that occurs in parliamentary systems (Needler, 1991, p. 116).

(MMP) system (Royal Commission on the Electoral System, 1986). In doing so, the Royal Commission had (perhaps inadvertently) provided "a tangible focal point for a host of generalised dissatisfactions" (Aimer & Miller, 2002a, p. 2)[4].

The proposal was perhaps too radical for Parliament – the government neglected the report, and did not issue a response on the report until the lack of action led to the report becoming an election issue in 1990. In a game of one-upmanship, both major parties then pledged to hold a referendum on the electoral system if elected[5]. Upon the election of the National Government in 1990, a referendum was scheduled to be held in 1992.

The 1992 'preferendum'

The 1992 referendum was a preliminary, non-binding referendum[6] which asked New Zealand voters whether they supported a change from the existing electoral system of FPP, and if so, what alternative system they preferred.

The results were "of genuinely landslide proportions" (Levine & Roberts, 1993b, p. 59). Following the referendum, Labour Leader Mike Moore was famously quoted as saying "The people didn't speak on Saturday. They screamed." (Levine & Roberts, 1993b, p. 57). An overwhelming majority of 85 percent of voters chose to change the electoral system. Alternative options given were MMP, single transferable vote, supplementary member, or preferential vote. Again, a significant majority (70 percent) voted for a change towards MMP (New Zealand Electoral Commission, n.d.).

A subsequent binding referendum was held in 1993, coinciding with the general election. The referendum offered two choices: stay with the current electoral system (FPP), or change to MMP. Fifty four percent of voters opted to change to MMP, which was introduced for the 1996 general election (New Zealand Electoral Commission, n.d.).

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[4] Vowles (2005) notes that a shift towards multiparty politics (due to new political issues and social movements which could not be contained in the two-party system) was also a factor in the call for a change in system.

[5] The first party to announce the promise of a referendum was Labour leader David Lange, despite the majority of the Labour cabinet opposing a referendum (Katz, 2005, p. 66). Lange is purported to have later claimed that the announcement of a referendum was, in fact, a mistake in reading his notes (Donald, 2003; Jackson, 1993).

[6] This is despite the fact that the National Party's 1990 election manifesto actually promised to hold a binding referendum in 1992 (Jackson, 1993).

In 1996 New Zealand held its first election under the MMP system. While the formation of a government following the 1996 election was the longest coalition negotiation period to date (of two months), the system has now been in place for 17 years.

The road to 2011

The MMP system was reviewed by a parliamentary select committee in 2000 to assess the effect of changes to the division of electoral districts and Maori representation enacted under the Electoral Act 1993, and to consider whether there should be "a further referendum on the changes to the electoral system" (Electoral Act 1993, s264(1)). The review made recommendations on the list system, representation of Maori and minority interests, dual candidacy, electoral boundaries, and seats, but the Select Committee was unable to reach a consensus on whether MMP should be retained and therefore made no recommendation on the matter. The Government noted in its response to the Select Committee's report that it did not consider there was sufficient consensus[7] within the committee or from the public to justify a further review of the electoral system at the time (New Zealand Government, 2001).

However, eight years later the National Party proposed a referendum on MMP as part of its campaign pledges for the 2008 election[8]. Upon winning the election, preparations were made for a referendum to coincide with the 2011 general election (Cabinet preparing for MMP referendum: Key, 2009).

The Electoral Referendum Act 2010 provided for a referendum to be held on whether voters wished to retain the current MMP electoral system, and for a review of MMP to be undertaken by the Electoral Commission if the outcome of the referendum was in favour of retaining MMP. The 2011 referendum asked two questions: If voters wished to retain the current MMP system, and their most preferred alternative system. Some 57 percent of New Zealanders voted to retain MMP (New Zealand Electoral Commission, 2011c).

[7] "Sufficient consensus" for this committee was a particularly high bar. Most New Zealand select committees only require a simple majority to make a recommendation on behalf of the committee. The terms of reference for the Review of MMP, however, only enabled the committee to make a recommendation if it has unanimous or near-unanimous support for the recommendation (MMP Review Committee, 2001; New Zealand Government, 2001).

[8] Following the shift to MMP, the National Party had made several references to a referendum on whether MMP should be retained, including the introduction of the Electoral Optional Referenda Bill in 2000.

Following the referendum, in 2012 the New Zealand Electoral Commission undertook a review of the MMP system, with a view to establishing whether any improvements should be made (New Zealand Electoral Commission, 2013b).

A change in electoral system can be a significant shift in the way a country is governed. Electoral systems form the foundation of citizens' participation in democracy. They translate preferences into representation in the legislative structure. They also have an influence on the level of involvement citizens have in governance decisions, the limits of representatives' power, and the checks and balances in place to ensure the government acts in the interests of its citizens.

But a change in electoral system is not common. It is usually the result of a move by a self-interested government seeking to create a system that favours their re-election, or as a response to "deep-rooted ruptures in the historical and political development" of a country (Nohlen, 1984, as cited in Katz, 2005).

In New Zealand it was the "high-handed imposition of policies that were contrary to the wishes of the people, the electoral manifesto of the government in office, and the preferences of the government's backbench supporters" that led to a call for change in this first instance (Katz, 2005, p. 69). By choosing to change the system through a referendum, the Government handed the decision of how they wanted to be governed back to the citizens of New Zealand.

So how did New Zealand voters make their decisions? What information contributed to the decision to turn their backs on almost 73 years of elections under FPP[9] in favour of a new system, and to retain it almost 20 years later? This thesis considers how lobby groups sought to influence voters during the referenda campaigns and what messages their advertising presented to the voters about the key issues of the referenda.

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[9] From 1853 until 1993 almost all elections were held under the FPP system. There was, however, a brief period between 1908 and 1913 where elections were held under a second-ballot system. This provided that if no candidate won more than 50 percent of the votes in an electorate, a run-off would be held between the two top candidates. This system was abolished in 1913, and a pure FPP system reinstated (New Zealand Electoral Commission, n.d.).

Overview of the campaigns

1993 electoral referendum lobby groups

In 1993, the two major lobby groups for the electoral referendum were the Electoral Reform Coalition (ERC) and the Campaign for Better Government (CBG).

Founded in 1986 following the publication of the *Report of the Royal Commission on the Electoral System 1986*, the ERC was led by Labour activist Phil Saxby. Members included a mix of Alliance party members, trade union representatives, and a small number of sitting MPs (Donald, 2003; Temple, 1995, p. 236). Characterised as a "well-organised pressure group with strong links into community networks" (James & McRobie, 1993, p. 127), the ERC had a centralised structure with, with activities planned by a small group of Wellington based activists. However, in a reflection of its grassroots nature, individual branches enjoyed "a high degree of autonomy" (Donald, 2003). The total spend for the ERC has been reported by different sources as between $180,000 and $300,000 (Donald, 2003; Roberts, 2012a; Temple, 1995, p. 236) for the 1993 campaign.

The CBG was founded in 1993. Led by Telecom chairman Peter Shirtcliffe, the CBG reportedly spent over $1.5 million on their campaign (though one researcher notes that an analysis of the advertising suggests the spend is closer to $2 million (Temple, 1995, p. 236)). No spending caps were in place for the 1993 electoral referendum. However, it is remarkable that in the final week of the 1993 referendum and election campaign, CBG spent more on television advertising than the two main political parties (Donald, 2003). Funding contributors were not published, but it is widely assumed that the major financiers were prominent businesspeople within New Zealand (Donald, 2003; Temple, 1995).

2011 electoral referendum lobby groups

In 2011, the two major lobby groups for the electoral referendum were the Campaign for MMP (CFM) and Vote for Change (VFC).

The CFM was established in 2009. The CFM was founded by former ERC campaigners with an interest in ensuring their 'legacy' was defended (Grey & Fitzsimons, 2012, p. 298). Led by spokesperson Sandra Grey, President of the Tertiary Education Union (who was later joined in 2011 by spokesperson Lewis Holden, Chair of the New Zealand Republican movement), the campaign was organised in a similar way to the 1993 CBG campaign. A centralised group set

national messages and organised activities. Localised groups supported the national campaign, while retaining a reasonable level of autonomy. Unlike the 1993 referendum, spending caps were in place for 2011 electoral referendum campaign spending. Promoters who spent more than $100,000 on referendum expenses were required to submit expense returns to the New Zealand Electoral Commission. The total spend for the CFM was just over $156,000 (New Zealand Electoral Commission, 2011f).

The VFC campaign was launched in June 2011. While Peter Shirtcliffe was listed as one of the founding members of the campaign, the campaign was represented as a new campaign, unrelated to the 1993 CBG. VFC was led by Wellington-based campaign spokesperson Jordan Williams, and supported by founding members such as Bob Harvey, a former Labour Party President and Michael Bassett, a former Labour Party Cabinet Minister (Vote for Change, 2011c). The total spend for the VFC campaign was just over $79,000 (New Zealand Electoral Commission, 2011f).

1   Introduction

1.1   Background of the study

> *"Electoral systems… are a crucial link in the chain*
> *connecting the preferences of citizens to the policy choices*
> *made by governments".*
>
> *(Gallagher & Mitchell, 2005)*

The electoral system of a country determines how voters' choices are translated and how the government can operate. The choice of system affects the composition of parliament, the ability of a government to implement policy, the checks and balances on policy implementation, the level of representation versus participation by citizens, and how representatives are held accountable for their actions. In a parliamentary democracy such as New Zealand, the electoral system also has a significant influence on the formation of governments.

An electoral system is a crucial link in the chain of representative democracy (Gallagher & Mitchell, 2005). A change in electoral system changes how a country is governed, and thus changes the society in which we live in.

In 1992, 1993 and 2011, New Zealanders were presented with the choice of retaining their current electoral system or changing to a different system through a national referendum. The result of the 1992 and 1993 referenda was a dramatic change which saw New Zealand shift to a MMP representation system, after 73 years of elections under the FPP system. Eighteen years later, in the 2011 referendum, New Zealand chose to retain the MMP system.

So what information did New Zealand voters base their decisions on, and how was this information presented?

1.2   Statement of the problem

There is a strong body of literature which considers the role of the media in democracy, political advertising campaigns, and the effects of the media's use of framing, defined in this research as "the subtle alterations in the statement or presentation of judgement and choice problems" (Iyengar, as cited in Carpini, 2005, p. 24).

However, while referenda are similar to general elections in that they both have campaign advertising, referenda advertising is aimed at gaining a vote for or against

a single policy/issue, rather than a vote for one of a number of political parties and/or candidates. If political parties have not identified with a particular side (which de Vreese and Semetko (2004) often refer to as the 'yes' or 'no' camp), partisan voters do not have the option of simply choosing what the party supports. De Vreese and Semetko (2004) note that the strength of strategic alliances for referenda campaigns, and whether or not the 'rules' (e.g. expenditure caps or government funding) are the same can also affect the level of professionalisation that can be expected in a referenda campaign.

Unfortunately, the literature regarding advertising and referenda, particularly regarding advertising and the electoral referenda in New Zealand, is scarce. There is information on the backers of the campaigns, funding limits, the official information campaign, and the "political colours" of the campaign (Aimer & Miller, 2002b; Levine & Roberts, 1993a; Temple, 1995), but there does not appear to be an assessment of the advertising itself. More specifically, there does not appear to be any research concerning the advertising of the electoral referenda, or the messages presented within this advertising.

Drawing on theories of the democratic role of the media, political advertising, and framing theory, this thesis looks at referenda and campaign advertising theory in the New Zealand context, through a study of the 1993 and 2011 electoral referenda[10]. This research has been considered taking into the account both political science and media effects theories to provide a cross-discipline study of how advertising, as part of the broader media landscape, framed the discussion of issues in the 1993 and 2011 New Zealand electoral referenda.

1.3   Purpose of the study

The focus of this research is to compare and contrast the frames presented in advertising in the 1993 and 2011 New Zealand electoral referenda campaigns.

This research explores what kind of information was available to voters about the impacts of a change in electoral system. It assesses what aspects of the systems the information emphasised, with a particular focus on the information provided through the advertising campaigns run by lobby groups during the 1993 and 2011 referenda.

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[10] This study does not consider the electoral advertising of the 1992 non-binding referendum on the electoral system.

By examining how the issues surrounding the debate between electoral systems were framed, this thesis seeks to determine how the discussion of issues to do with the choice of electoral systems was framed. Building on an assessment of advertising frames, this research seeks to evaluate the difference between the frames presented in the 1993 and 2011 referenda campaigns, to identify how each electoral system was portrayed, and whether the information provided was consistent with official information on the key aspects of these systems.

1.4 Research questions

This thesis compares and contrasts the frames presented in advertising in the 1993 and 2011 electoral referendum campaigns. In assessing the two campaigns, the following research questions are addressed:

1. What were the main themes the electoral referenda advertising focused on?

2. What aspects of the issues were given prominence in each referendum campaign?

3. What themes were used by more than one referendum campaigns?

4. How did each campaign position itself in relation to the other(s)?

1.5 Theoretical approach

This research is grounded in a critical realist perspective (discussed in further in Chapter 3) and draws on both democratic political theory and media theories of framing and semiotics.

Democratic political theory often assigns media the role of the 'watchdog'. This role can refer to both the importance of providing independent information to citizens in a democracy[11], or to the media's role in protecting democracy - an independent arbiter to question and investigate the actions of those in power to ensure that the citizens are fully informed about the actions of its elected leaders (Strömbäck, 2005, p. 332). By providing information that allows citizens to assess the performance of elected officials, the media is ascribed a role in informing voting decisions, therefore

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[11] It should be noted here that there are many competing theories of democracy. Democracy, in the sense that it is used here, refers to the broad set of theories that have in common a measure of participation by citizens in the governance of their country (often referred to as "governance of, by, and for the people" (Dahlgreen, 2009, p. 2)).

ensuring that voters' ballots reflect their real interests (Norris, 2004) and confirming whether elected officials are fulfilling their mandate[12].

Media channels can be used as a tool to create a 'civic forum' where citizens and the state can debate major issues. Access to sufficient and relevant data is necessary if citizens are to be able to make informed choices "consistent with their preferences and interests" (Freedman, Franz, & Goldstein, 2004, p. 723).

But this role isn't just confined to the fourth estate. Media channels are, as their name implies, a medium. They are a tool that can be used both by the media, but also by wider society, to foster debate, inform, and persuade. Those who participate in the 'civic forum' can include businesses, lobby groups, politicians, or individuals.

The use of media channels as a civic forum is particularly noticeable during national election campaigns. While news media reports cover the daily activities of election candidates, advertising spaces fill up with partisan commercials that seek to persuade voters.

Campaign advertising fulfils a slightly different democratic role than journalistic coverage of a political campaign. While the media is given the roles of watchdog and educator to ensure a healthy democracy, campaign advertising is a partisan message carried by the media[13]. Advertising is presented through the same mainstream media channels as the journalistic content that fulfils the democratic functions of the media, but it is shown during advertising breaks. In this way, it is clearly identified as a paid message separate from journalistic coverage, but it uses existing media channels to present an unmediated message to viewers.

Because it is less mediated, paid advertising offers a simple means to assess what issues a particular interest group was promoting (and through what frames) during the electoral referendum campaigns.

There are competing studies regarding the education of voters through advertising, particularly as to whether the information in the media reaches the uneducated

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[12] Whether this information is used to judge the past actions of elected officials, or to judge the potential of those standing for election is dependent on which of the many theories of democracy one subscribes to (e.g. sanctional variant of competitive democracy, or mandate variant), and further whether an official is elected under a specific mandate, or to act more generally as an agent of the people (Strömbäck, 2005, p. 335).

[13] The term "campaign advertising" is used here to describe the activities of partisan lobby groups, as distinct from the "official information campaign" run by the New Zealand Electoral Commission, an independent Crown Entity.

viewer or helps those who are already well-informed stay that way (Dumitrescu & Mughan, 2010). However, Dumitrescu and Mughan state that "most would agree that media exposure, whether to political news or political advertising, has a positive impact on individuals' level of political knowledge and information..." (2010, p. 485). Campaign advertising has "the potential to bring about a more attentive, more informed, and more participatory citizenry" (Freedman et al., 2004, p. 734), fulfilling a value democratic role in both elections and referenda (Freedman et al., 2004).

The way in which issues are presented in the media can affect the way citizens perceive those issues. Within studies of media effects, framing theory considers the prominence given to particular aspects of an issue, and the 'angle' that is used to portray an issue (Entman, 1993, as cited in Scheufele, 1999).

While individuals may view and incorporate media information into a "version of reality built from personal experience, interaction with peers, and interpreted selections from mass media" (Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992, as cited in Scheufele, 1999, p. 105), the frames that are presented by political actors are typically designed to influence the way the public views an issue.

This thesis looks at the use of frames used in campaign advertising for the 1993 and 2011 referendum, with a view to understanding how partisan actors sought to influence voters through their referendum campaigns. Through framing analysis and media semiotics, this research will then look to establish the underlying structures (as 'frames') that were used to present information to voters in referendum advertising. By understanding these structures, this report can contribute to the broader knowledge of structural influences on individuals' understanding of the key issues during the referendum.

Framing can be defined as "the subtle alterations in the statement or presentation of judgement and choice problems" (Iyengar, as cited in Carpini, 2005). Entman (as cited in Street, 2001, p. 37) defined framing as a tool that can be used to "select and highlight some features of reality and obscure others in a way that tells a consistent story about problems, their causes, moral implications, and remedies". Framing can suggest what the key elements of an issue are, or relate a particular piece of information to the audience's daily lives (Scheufele, 1999). This framing can either be a conscious choice to present information from a particular perspective, or a less deliberate decision to use a cultural frame to provide context to an issue, without a deliberate attempt to persuade or intention to present a specific view of an issue.

Framing analysis explores media coverage with the knowledge that there are many ways to tell a story, and different frames can produce different outcomes (Street, 2001).

Framing theory allows the researcher to consider how a set of information about the structural features and potential outcomes of different electoral systems can be presented in different ways in order to highlight particular features or imply certain outcomes.

Semiotics is the study of 'signs' – visual elements, sounds, narratives, or text and their embedded meanings. Media semiotics, as defined by Danesi (2002), studies the use of these signs in the media as an efficient means to convey meaning. Advertising is not only an information medium, but also a persuasive medium. Advertising asks us to participate "in ideological ways of seeing ourselves and the world " (Bignell, 2002, p. 31) – correlating feelings, moods, or attributes to objects (or in the context of political advertising, policies). Semiotic theory will be used in this research to identify the signs used in electoral system advertising to attribute different social meanings to the different systems. In line with the epistemological approach to this research, semiotic theory will be used to better understand the broader social influences (such as socioeconomic position or identification with cultural groups) that are being evoked by these signs.

Media semiotics complements framing theory by looking at the way images and text are used to promote one system over another (for example, by presenting the systems in opposition to each other) and promoting an electoral system as an ideological concept that the audience can associate with.

Together, these theories will provide a framework to identify both the deliberate strategic decisions of how issues are framed (e.g., what content is displayed, what issues to cover, what 'spin' is placed on the issue), and the unconscious[14] messages built into the frames through the use of signs and symbols.

Through framing analysis and media semiotics, this research will look to establish the underlying structures (as 'frames') that were used to present information (and the lobby groups' views on this information) to voters in referendum advertising. By

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[14] Note: This 'unconscious' message could be either unconsciously built into the message by the advertiser/lobby group (i.e. their subconscious choice of specific signs and symbols provides additional meaning), or a conscious choice of signs and symbols by the advertiser/lobby group, which then forms a 'subconscious' message to the viewer (Robinson, 2006).

understanding these structures, this research can contribute to the broader knowledge of structural influences on individuals' understanding of the key issues during the referendum.

1.6 Summary of key terms

The key terms used throughout this thesis, and their meanings, are detailed below.

Advertising

"The process and means by which products, services, ideas, and brands are promoted through mass-media messages with the intent to influence audience behaviour, awareness, and/or attitudes" (Chandler & Munday, 2011).

Campaign

A series of activities for a political group or ideological group (including lobby group advertising for a particular issue), which together form an integrated communication strategy designed to influence a specific target audience.

Code

The categories used to identify advertising elements which shared the same topics, ideas, and concepts. In this research, the 'codes' were later used for thematic analysis, and are therefore synonymous with 'themes'.

Coding

The process of identifying consistent topics, ideas, or concepts ('codes') within the advertising, and the categorisation and counting of these codes.

Campaign advertising

Advertising created by, and/or paid for by a partisan group with the purpose of encouraging or persuading a voter to vote for a particular option (e.g. a political party or a referendum option).

Digital or Online Advertising

Advertising that is published in paid advertising space on the Internet, including but not limited to banner ads, text advertising, and animated images.

Framing

The conscious or subconscious use of 'frames' to present an issue from a particular viewpoint, and how this can suggest what the key elements of an issue are, or relate a particular piece of information to the audience's daily lives.

Frame

The specific framework (or 'angle') used to present an issue, which can create framing effects.

Semiotics

A field of study which focuses on the study of 'signs' – visual elements, sounds, narratives, or text – and their embedded meanings.

Theme

A recurring topic, idea, or concept that is observed in the advertising, and has been identified through content analysis (see also: *Codes*).

1.7 Organisation of study

This thesis is presented in seven chapters. Chapter 1 includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, and conceptual framework.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature, which includes liberal democratic theory and the role of referenda, media effects (including political and referendum campaign effects), framing theory, and political advertising. An assessment of the emerging literature on digital advertising is also included.

Chapter 3 details the methodology used to assess the two case studies. It includes the criteria used for selecting advertising material, the data collection process, how data was analysed, and the key assumptions and limitations of the methods used.

Chapters 4 and 5 set out the results of the data collection and provide an analysis of the 1993 and 2011 referendum advertising. They are also the points at which the first two research questions noted in section 1.4 above are addressed. These two chapters include the findings of the 1993 and 2011 case studies, and include an analysis of the frames presented in advertising from each of the two electoral referenda. In direct response to the remaining two research questions, a full analysis of the themes that

run across the 1993 and 2011 campaigns is considered in Chapter 6, with the final conclusions of the research presented in Chapter 7.

Further information about the background to the electoral referenda, and the political environment during the referenda, is provided in the Preface.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The study of media and politics examines the connection between two discrete academic fields: that of political theory and media/communications theory. It is possible to examine referenda advertising simply from a political research approach, examining the relative strength of referenda as a tool to enhance democratic values or promote an ideological agenda. Likewise, this research could also be approached as a media study to consider the role of advertising as an education and persuasion tool, using the outcome of the referenda as an evaluation tool to assess the impact of various advertising campaigns on the 'audience' of voters.

However, taking an interdisciplinary approach to assessing the question of what messages the advertising campaigns presented for the electoral referenda provides the opportunity to assess the advertising using models that consider both democratic and ideological values, and the persuasive, 'audience–focused' aspects of electoral advertising.

This chapter considers the current literature surrounding the study of referenda advertising campaigns in New Zealand, and develops a rationale for conducting further research of referenda advertising campaigns.

First, the wider theories of the role of referenda within liberal democracies are considered. Following this, the media effects theories and the current literature on political and referendum campaign effects are reviewed. Building on media effects theory, the specific areas of political and referendum advertising are considered, with particular reference to studies of the New Zealand environment. Finally, the emerging literature on digital advertising is assessed.

By combining aspects of both the political and communications field, this research will consider the impact of advertising as a persuasive communication tool on the democratic objectives of the electoral referenda.

2.2 Liberal democratic theory and the role of referenda

Democracy is often referred to as "governance of, by, and for the people" (Dahlgreen, 2009, p. 2). With its foundations in the liberal theories of a social contract between the government and the governed, modern democratic theories share a common belief in a measure of participation by citizens in the governance of their country.

Democratic theories differ in their preferred voting structures and constitutional arrangements[15]. However, they broadly agree that the core decisions on how a democracy runs - its constitutional arrangements and any changes to those arrangements - should be decided by the wider population. The common way of seeking agreement on these changes is through some form of referendum, based on the desire that "those political decisions which affect the fundamental rules of the political system... will not be against the will of the majority" (Morrison, 2002, p. 94)[16].

A referendum is a poll of all registered voters; "the direct voting of the people as to what action should be taken by the government upon an issue" (Electoral Act, 1993). Referenda are mandatory for constitutional amendments in a number of countries, including New Zealand, Australia, Denmark, Ireland, and Switzerland (Electoral Act, 1993; Setälä, 1999). The results of referenda can be binding on the government or merely indicative of a preference. They can be initiated through constitutional checks and balances – for example, some countries are bound by legislation to put any proposed constitutional changes to a vote by referendum. Alternatively, a government can elect to run a referendum to decide the outcome of nationally significant policy. This method is sometimes used for more controversial or morality-based policy changes, such as the 1995 referendum on lifting the ban on divorce in Ireland (Krupnikov, 2011), or for changes that would cede sovereign power to another body, such as the referenda on membership to the European Union that countries such as Ireland, France, and Denmark held in the 1990s (Morrison, 2002).

The use of referenda has steadily risen over the past thirty years, particularly in 'advanced democracies' such as Canada, Austria, New Zealand, Switzerland, Italy (Donovan & Karp, 2006; Morrison, 2002).

Donovan and Karp (2006) summarise the increase in calls for referenda into three main theories:

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[15] For example, representative democracy focuses on electing representatives to act on one's behalf - with or without a mandate to do specific work, while participatory democracy prioritises more involved concepts of all citizens being involved in all decisions (Heywood, 2007, p74).

[16] Setälä also comments, however, that while some jurisdictions require mandatory referenda for constitutional changes, the constitution which is being changed is not subject to independent interpretation. Despite this, the use of a referendum to establish constitutional changes could be argued as a way to negotiate a change to the social contract, and avoid a parliamentary majority changing the system in its favour (1999).

1. *Decreasing citizen confidence in the machinery of government:* referenda as a tool that balances citizens' conflicting interest in greater involvement in political decisions (due to decreasing confidence in the current processes) with their lack of interest in processes which require higher involvement such as direct democracy (e.g. Norris, 1999; Ingelhart, 1999).

2. *Partisan dealignment:* direct democracy as a means to make decisions in the absence of a strong ideology/party which reflects the voters' ideals (e.g. Bogandor, 1994).

3. *A shift towards direct democracy:* referenda as a sign of a wider move towards direct democracy, which will address the decline in voter participation (e.g. Scarrow, 1999).

Recent calls for referenda in New Zealand lend weight to the theory of partisan dealignment, and suggest that an increasing number of citizens do not see the election of a government as providing a political party with a carte blanche mandate (despite the fact that the current system allows exactly that). That said, Donovan and Karp's (2006) assessment of these theories against the results of public opinion surveys on referenda concludes that none of the above theories is sufficient to explain the increase in direct democratic tools such as referenda. Likewise, the support for these tools is amongst those who are already politically engaged, which does not suggest that referenda are a panacea to partisan dealignment or declining voter participation.

2.2.1   Use of referenda in New Zealand

The New Zealand Government is only required to hold a referendum to enact *major* constitutional changes identified in the reserved provisions (section 268) [17] of the Electoral Act 1993. Specifically, the Act details a list of major changes to the electoral system, referred to as 'reserved provisions' within the Act, cannot be repealed or amended unless the proposed change is either passed by a majority of 75 percent of all the members of the House of Representatives, or carried by the majority of votes cast at a poll of all voters (Electoral Act, 1993). The 1993 referendum on electoral

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[17] The reserved provisions under section 268 of the Act cover: amendments to sections of legislation that refer to the term of Parliament, the composition of the Representation Commission, the division of electoral districts, the definition of the term 'General Electoral Population', the allowance for the adjustment of the quota that determines the number of North and South Island electorate districts, the voting age, or the method of voting.

system was one held under these reserved provisions (New Zealand Electoral Commission, 2011c).

There have been 38 national referenda held in New Zealand (Roberts, 2012b); only five referenda were government-initiated referenda that were not required by legislation. These referenda covered topics such as off-course betting, compulsory military service, compulsory retirement, and the 1992 and 2011 electoral referenda[18]. New Zealand also allows citizen-initiated referenda, where citizens can present an application to the House of Representatives asking for a referendum to be held on a specific topic.

The use of referenda in New Zealand has a varied history. The 'reserved provisions' of the Electoral Act assure that a referendum will be held to decide on major changes to the electoral system, and that the Government will be bound by the result. While technically this change can also be confirmed with a 75 percent vote within the House of Representatives, no Government has yet attempted to change the reserved provisions in this way. One could argue that this is because a poll of the voters is considered a more appropriate way to change the core structure of the voting system than a poll of the Members of Parliament, who may be perceived to have ulterior motives in changing the voting system.

The option for citizen-initiated referendum (CIR) was introduced in New Zealand in 1993 through the Citizens Initiated Referenda Act 1993. The Act requires a referendum to be held if 10 percent of enrolled voters sign a petition calling for a referendum. Thirty three petitions for referenda have been received by the Office of the Clerk since the introduction of this Act, and four have gone to vote. However, the Government is not obliged to act on the result of a CIR, and has refused to act on the results of past CIR (Parkinson, 2001).

Roberts (2012b) claims that referenda are "a means for Parliament to avoid making decisions on controversial and divisive issues without public approval". While it is true that referenda can effectively be a mechanism to push difficult issues out of the political sphere and back in to the hands of voters, it is not frequently used as such. The topics previous governments have chosen to take to the poll are either constitutional issues that may lead to a compulsory referendum (e.g. the 1992 and

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[18] The 1992 and 2011 referenda were not technically required by legislation, as it was not a proposal to change the electoral system, but was rather a proposal to maintain status quo or investigate other electoral system options.

2011 electoral system referenda) or morality issues which are likely to be contentious (e.g. the 1949 referendum on off-course betting).

However, there are other controversial or morality-based policy changes that have occurred in recent New Zealand history for which the government did not choose to hold referenda. For example, the Prostitution Reform Act 2003, the Civil Union Act 2004, and the Sale of Liquor Amendment Act 1999 (which lowered the legal purchase age for alcohol from 20 to 18 years old). Instead, these issues were put to a conscience vote in Parliament (Lindsey, 2011).

While referenda are used both voluntarily and as a legislated requirement for confirming constitutional change within New Zealand, the use of referenda outside of legislation is both unpredictable (for government-initiated referenda) and at times ineffective (for citizens-initiated referenda).

2.3 Media effects and framing theory

The effects of the media on people's opinions differ depending on the content, situation, and the viewer. Early media effects studies considered the media's ability to influence to be a simple case of a message being transmitted, and wholeheartedly accepted by the receiver (the 'hypodermic needle model'). With the development of the body of knowledge on media effects, this theory is now considered to be overly simplistic. Some argue that the main effect media has is to help reinforce existing attitudes (e.g. Scheufele, 1999). However, other theorists suggest one of the key influences in media effects is the interaction between the media and its audience, with the media having the ability to persuade the audience dependent on the topic, the context (i.e., how the message is delivered), the viewer's[19] existing knowledge on the subject, and the viewer's personality (Milburn, 1991; Sears and Freedman, 1967, as cited in Zhao & Chaffee, 1995, p. 43).

There are three main theories of cognitive media effects: agenda-setting, framing, and priming (Scheufele, 1999).

Agenda-setting theory was originally developed as a means to explain the media's role in setting the key political issues in elections. It looks at what issues are given prominence in the media, and how this affects the "mental agenda" of issues that the public considers during the elections (Sutherland, 2008). Agenda-setting theory not

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[19] The term 'viewer' is used here as a general term. These theories equally apply to non-visual sources of media such as radio and print.

only applies to the way the media set the mental agenda, but also to how advertising can also play this role.

Priming considers how the media can influence "the standards by which governments, presidents, policies, and candidates for public office are judged", by making some issues more salient than others (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987, as cited in Scheufele, 2000, p. 305).

Framing theory differs from agenda setting theory in that it refers to the prominence given to particular aspects of an issue, and the 'angle' that is used to portray the issue, rather than the selection of the issue itself (Entman, 1993, as cited in Scheufele, 1999). The way in which issues are framed in the media can affect the way citizens perceive those issues. As a key source of information, the media are 'uniquely positioned", and can introduce frames to the discussion of issues. In comparison to agenda-setting, framing influences how an audience thinks about an issue, rather than influencing what issues audiences think about (Scheufele, 1999, as cited in McHoul, 1996, p. 150).

Not all scholarship sees these theories as distinct. For example, in Scheufele's assessment of framing as a theory of media effects (1999), he notes that these terms have been used interchangeably. Weaver, McCombs, and Shaw (1998) consider framing and priming to be extensions of agenda-setting theory. However, Scheufele (2000) argues that while agenda-setting and priming are concerned with the salience of issues (and it could be argued that priming is the outcome of agenda-setting), framing is more focused on interpretation of an issue.

Given framing theory's focus on how an issue is presented (as separate to how an issue gains prominence), I would argue that agenda-setting and priming are more closely related, as they consider the salience of issues and how particular issues are given prominence in the media (and therefore in voters' minds). In contrast, framing is the study of how these issues – once given salience/put on the agenda – are presented to viewers.

It should also be noted that there is also a significant amount of literature dealing specifically with negative frames, and their impact in the field of political communication. While much of this is not grounded specifically in theories of framing, it incorporates an assessment of content and tone, and sits within broader media effects analysis (of which framing is a subset). The most prominent research in this area is a 1994 study by Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon and Valentino, which

assessed the effects of negative campaign advertising within a controlled lab environment (1994). The study concluded that attack advertising (defined as advertising where candidates criticise, discredit, or belittle opponents rather than promote their policies) have a negative effect on voting intentions. However, more recent studies are challenging the large volume of work supporting Ansolabehere et al. For instance, Finkel and Geer (1998), and Lau, Sigelman, Heldman, and Babbit (1999, as cited in Goldstein & Freedman, 2002) have been unable to reproduce Ansolabehere et al's findings. Goldstein and Freedman (2002) suggest that at this time there is still contention between theorists about whether or not negative frames decrease voter participation. This uncertainty is compounded by advertising theories that support the use of negative advertising in political campaigns, suggesting such advertising is more memorable, better engages voters, increases voter turnout, and contributes to the forming of deliberative opinions (Dermody & Scullion, 2003).

Dermody and Scullion (2003) attempt some level of reconciliation between these competing views, noting that it is statistically difficult to prove whether there are positive or negative effects on voter participation when political advertising uses negative frames. They hypothesise that the effects may differ depending on the type of negative frame – for example, an image attack or personal criticism is likely to have a more negative effect than an advertisement challenging an opponent's policies or leadership credentials. While further investigation into negative frames and their potential influence on voter behaviour is outside of the scope of this research, an assessment of whether the 1993 and 2011 electoral referenda advertising uses negative frames may indicate whether the advertising had wider reaching effects on the referendum than the provision of accurate information.

Critical realist views of framing argue that external frames (e.g. media frames, frames presented by political campaigns) are always assessed against individual frames. Critical realist news media researchers argue that individuals view and incorporate media information into a "version of reality built from personal experience, interaction with peers, and interpreted selections from mass media" (Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992, as cited in Scheufele, 1999, p. 105).

The two main theories consistent with the critical research paradigm that consider how viewers assess news media output are Petty and Cacciopo's Elaboration Likelihood Model and Koscki & McLeod's three methods of news processing.

Petty and Cacioppo's elaboration likelihood model states that the context in which the message is received can alter the level of consideration the viewer will give the message. This theory states that there are two likely routes of persuasion: the central or peripheral route. The media can attempt to persuade through a central route such as radio advertising or a documentary or a peripheral route such as product placement in a popular comedy or magazine. When receiving messages through the central route, the audience expects that the media will be trying to persuade them, and because of this they will apply some level of scrutiny to the message. However, when a message is received through a peripheral route, the audience is usually not expecting that the media is trying to persuade them. As such, audiences apply a lower level of scrutiny to these messages (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

Cacioppo and Petty also apply Arthur Cohen's concept of individuals with a higher 'need for cognition' to media effects, theorising that a viewer's need for cognition can also affect how messages are received (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982). Cohen proposes that some individuals have a higher need for cognition than others. Being naturally motivated to think a lot, if these people have an opportunity to exercise their higher need for cognition, they will take it. This theory can be further extended to explain why some individuals are more interested in current affairs and political news than others. Those with a higher need for cognition are more likely to be interested in media that exercise this need, such as political news (Condra, 1992; Perse, 1992; Sparks, 2010). According to Perloff (2010, p. 233) the more a message matches an individual's need for cognition, the more likely the message will be successful in changing attitudes. However, being receptive to a message does not guarantee that a viewer will be persuaded by that message. If the topic is one that the viewer is well-informed on, the strength of their personal beliefs about the topic may mean the viewer is less likely to be persuaded by messages that don't reflect these beliefs (Bryant & Thompson, 2002). A viewer with a high need for cognition will be motivated to seek media that exercises this need, but it is more as a means of seeking information than being able to be persuaded.

In contrast to Cacioppo and Petty's model, Kosicki and McLeod propose that viewers process news media messages in one of three different ways: active processing, reflective integration, or selective scanning. In this theory, active processors seek out additional information, which they then use to assess the information provided via the media. Reflective integrators consider the information, with a view to integrating the information into their existing mental frameworks.

Selective scanners 'pick and choose' information from the media, based on what they consider to be relevant (Koscki & McLeod, 1990, as cited in Scheufele, 1999).

These two models share much in common. Regardless of the way in which the viewer uses the information, viewers are not passive recipients of media messages. They reflect, consider, and in some cases reject the message they are being given.

2.4 Political advertising and campaign effects

Political advertising, as part of the overall media landscape, fulfils a slightly different democratic role than journalistic coverage of a political campaign. Generally, "...political advertising constitutes the primary form of communication between political candidates and the voting public" (Kaid, 1996, as cited in Bryant & Thompson, 2002, p. 309). While the media is given the roles of watchdog and educator to ensure a healthy democracy, political advertising is a partisan message carried by the media that seeks to persuade voters to support a particular policy, ideology, or party[20]. Political advertising is a partisan message carried by the media. Advertising is presented through the same mainstream media channels (i.e., print media, television, and radio, as well as the unmediated channels of billboards, digital media, and posters) that fulfil the democratic functions of the media, but it is shown during advertising breaks – a clear indication that someone has paid for the message that is being displayed. In this way, it is effectively an unmediated message to viewers (provided they meet advertising standards).

As it is less mediated, political advertising offers a simple means to assess what issues a particular interest group was promoting (and through what frames) during the electoral referenda campaigns.

2.4.1 Election campaign effects

The decision of how to vote is influenced a number of social and personal factors (Beck, Dalton, Greene, & Huckfeldt, 2002; Zaller, 1992, as cited in LeDuc, 2003, p. 3). In the same way that news media frames are assessed against personal beliefs, past knowledge, and the other frames presented, voting choices are assessed against more than just the information provided by a campaign.

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[20] The exception to this would be voter information campaigns run by politically neutral organisations such as the Electoral Commission. For simplicity, these are referred to as "voter information campaigns", and partisan messages intended to persuade a voter are referred to as "political advertising".

But campaigns do make a difference. Political judgements can be influenced by frequent exposure to information (Althaus, Nardulli, & Shaw, 2001). Banducci and Karp state that the notion that campaigns influence evaluations of political systems is reasonable; "for the average citizen, an election campaign provides the single most compelling incentive to think about government" (2003, p. 444).

There is evidence that regardless of whether audiences are *persuaded* by political advertisements, they often learn from such messages. News reports about campaign issues and candidates, political debates, and conventions have all been shown to be responsible for various amounts of knowledge gain among audiences (Conover & Feldman, 1989; Gunter, 1987; and McLeod, Bybee, & Durall, 1979, as cited in Bryant & Thompson, 2002). Simply the act of watching television has been shown to have a correlation with political knowledge, with repeated exposure increasing the levels of political information viewers can recall (Banducci & Karp, 2003).

Studies have shown that political advertising is an effective way to present information about key issues (Kaid, 1981; Kaid & Johnston, 1991), and Dumitrescu and Mughan (2010) cite various studies regarding paid political advertising and its effect on voter's knowledge. Dumitrescu and Mughan note that there are competing studies regarding the education of voters through advertising, particularly as to whether the information in the media reaches the uneducated viewer or helps those who are already well-informed stay that way (such as those with a high need for cognition, who may already exhibit high involvement with political news). However, they state that "most would agree that media exposure, whether to political news or political advertising, has a positive impact on individuals' level of political knowledge and information…" (2010, p. 485). Freedman, Franz, and Goldstein (2004), in their study of US citizens exposure to campaign advertising in the 2000 US National Election, conclude that television campaign advertising has positive effects on viewers' knowledge and level of engagement. Their study noted that the effects on campaign advertising exposure were strongest in individuals with low levels of political information. Freedman et al conclude that campaign advertising can "have the potential to bring about a more attentive, more informed, and more participatory citizenry" (2004, p. 734); indicating a democratic role for paid campaign advertising in both elections and (it can be assumed) referenda. In the wider media environment, "the information, images and ideas made available by the media may, for most people, be the main source of an awareness of… a present social location" (McQuail, 2000, p. 64).

Vowles (2004) asserts that the effect of political campaigns is also stronger in New Zealand relative to other western democracies. In a study of election campaign effects in Britain, Canada, France, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and the United States, changes in voter intentions across an election campaign were higher in New Zealand than the other countries assessed. In the 1996, 1999, and 2002 national elections, approximately one third of voters surveyed changed their vote within the last month of the election campaign. Approximately one quarter of those surveyed in New Zealand changed their voting intentions in the final four days of election campaigns (Vowles, 2004). This suggests that the events and information available in election campaigns has the potential to significantly change the direction of an election in New Zealand.

2.4.2   Referendum campaign effects

As the advertisers for referenda are, at times, the same familiar parties as voters see in electoral campaigns, there are some similarities between the political advertisements of election campaigns and those of referenda campaigns (for example, policy arguments may be made along ideological party lines). Referenda are also similar to general elections in that they both have campaign advertising.

Research into advertising and referenda is still fairly new. With the advent of the European Union (EU), and the use of referenda to seek public approval for joining the EU, more research is being undertaken in this area (for example, de Vreese & Semetko, 2002; Farrell & Schmitt-Back, 2002). However, at this stage the literature on campaign effects in referenda is sparse, and many assessments appear to assume that referendum campaign theory closely follows political campaign theory. However, there are some differences that suggest referenda advertising should not draw too heavily from political advertising theory. Advertising for a referendum is aimed at gaining a vote for or against a single policy or issue, rather than a vote for one of a number of political parties and/or for a candidate. If political parties have not identified with a particular side, partisan voters do not have the option of simply choosing what their preferred party supports. In the event of a lack of partisan support, it is uncertain whether links between media effects and political advertising theory drawn in previous studies would apply. What is clear, though, is that in the absence of partisan cues, voters depend even more on the information presented to them (LeDuc, 2002).

Much like political campaigns, referendum campaigns do appear to make a difference to the outcome of a referendum (Butler & Ranney, 1994). In fact, LeDuc

states that "in a referendum or initiative contest, campaigns are frequently more important than in ordinary partisan or candidate elections" (LeDuc, 2003, p. 1). LeDuc's study of referendum campaign effects over 23 referenda shows a significantly higher level of voter intention change than in general election campaigns. Given the propensity for a higher level of voter intention change in New Zealand relative to other countries, this suggests that referendum campaigns could have a dramatic effect on voter intentions in New Zealand. Polling data one week out from the 1992 referendum is alleged to have shown the FPP ahead, but within a week MMP had won the referendum by a landslide (Donald, 2003).

When the proposal put to a referendum is a new issue for the voter (for example, an exploration of new electoral systems or whether to join a regional economic block), the information and impressions presented in campaign advertising become more important in the decision process. When predispositions are reinforced by the rhetoric of the campaign, referendums begin to take on some of the characteristics of elections (Tonsgaard, 1992, as cited in LeDuc, 2003, p. 3).

2.5 The emerging unknown – campaign advertising and the Internet

From the mid-1990s, the advent of the Internet has been heralded as a game-changer for political campaigns (Foot & Schneider, 2002; Gibson & McAllister, 2005; Johnson, 2010a, 2010b; Suniga, Puig-I-Abril, & Rojas, 2009; Towner & Dulio, 2012).

In 2008, the use of the online channel by the Obama campaign in the US presidential elections captured the attention of commentators (Jensen, 2007; Luo, 2007; Madden, 2008; Ragan, 2008; Tumulty, 2007). The ability to provide a range of messages to different voter groups, and the use of the Internet as a fundraising tool opened up new avenues in the political campaigns. The Internet, it was claimed, was changing the way political campaign are conducted, how representatives are elected, and the way the public interacts with the political sphere.

Coleman and Spiller note that claims regarding the democratising potential of the Internet "would be wise to learn from the earlier discourse about television's effect on politics (2003, p. 3). In response to enthusiasm about the democratising potential of television, Halloran (1970, as cited in Coleman & Spiller, 2003, p. 2) noted that "the technology is there, the potential may be there, but predictions about

media use and effects in any country… must be tempered in light of the social, economic and political realities".

Like the advent of television, there are many scholars who question the influence of the online environment, and challenge the characterisation of the Internet as a "game-changer" (Coleman & Spiller, 2003; Miller, 2004; Pack, 2010; Thorburn & Jenkins, 2003; Ward, Gibson, & Lusoli, 2003; Williamson, 2010).

Rather, they propose that the Internet is being used to replicate traditional practices. It is an important component of a wider set of communication tools available to campaigners, but it is not likely to reform the overall political environment (Coleman & Spiller, 2003; A. Williamson, 2010).

Coleman and Spiller (2003) identify three key problems with the way the democratic effects of the Internet have been presented:

1. Overly deterministic statements about the social consequences of the adoption of new technologies;
2. Theoretical naivety about the scope for transcending existing representative structures and institutions; and
3. A preoccupation with narrow empirical questions, rather than the nature and practice of political representation.

Furthermore, the fact that new technology makes more direct representation achievable doesn't change the reasons for the use of a representative system of democracy (Coleman & Spiller, 2003). That is, countries choose representative democracy for many reasons, such as a desire to 'outsource' the day-to-day decision making to a representative. To claim that technology will enable direct democracy assumes that this is the preferred level of participation for citizens, without considering other factors that have led to the decision.

That is not to say that the introduction of new technology does not require change. Communication via the Internet is not the same as communication through radio, television, or print media. The Internet is a fast-moving, two-way communication channel. It is interactive.

The Internet has enabled better centralisation of the campaign organisation, and has fostered the emergence of the "permanent campaign", with communications staff and campaign planning continuing throughout a representative's term, and a focus

on maintaining the profile of the party or representative between elections (Coleman & Spiller, 2003; Miller, 2004).

However, the real benefit to campaigns appears to lie in the "back-end" – the big data, the vast range of information on voting preferences, the ability to identify niche voter segments, and the ability to tailor information to specific interest groups. While there may be an expectation that candidates need an online presence to appear relevant to the Internet generation, the reality is that it is just a different communication channel[21]. One of the key elements of the digital Obama campaign was "the value of the less sexy email databases and of developing ongoing communication strategies" (Gibson, Williamson, & Ward, 2010, p. 3).

That said, in New Zealand the Internet is rated highly as a source of information. In the 2008 World Internet Project survey, New Zealanders surveyed rated the Internet as a significantly more important source of information than television, newspapers, and radio[22]. Of particular note is that those surveyed rated the Internet as a more important information source than interpersonal sources (e.g. family and friends) (Smith et al., 2008). Smith et al do not appear to differentiate between the media sites on the Internet and social media. Therefore it is possible that the high rating ascribed to the Internet as a media source is due to the Internet providing information from both interpersonal sources (through social media) and media sources (through news websites).

The literature surrounding the potential for the Internet to displace use of traditional media such as radio, newspapers, or television is conflicting. Some studies suggest that it displaces the use of traditional media channels (Lee & Leung, 2006), though it may depend on the use of the Internet (e.g. seeking information, social communication, entertainment) (Kraut, Kiesler, Boneva, & Shklovski, n.d.). Yet others suggest the Internet enhances the use of traditional media sources (W. Lee & Kuo, 2006) or that there is no observable effect (Robinson, Kestnbaum, Neustadtl, & Alvarez, 2000).

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[21] While the success of the digital aspects of the 2008 Obama campaign are not solely attributed to the Internet, Williamson also suggests that the core difference between online campaigns in the US and campaigns in Westminster democracies is the "individualistic, candidate-centric focus of the US presidential campaign", which may be better suited to the online channel (Williamson, 2010).

[22] 61 percent of those surveyed rated the Internet as an important source of information, in comparison to television (58 percent), newspapers (54 percent) and radio (46 percent) (Smith et al., 2008, p. 315).

As with traditional media channels, the online channel follows "traditional participatory divides". In line with the 'need for cognition' theory (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982), those who seek information through online channels tend to be the same people who seek the information through traditional media channels (Gibson, Cantijoch, & Ward, 2010). In addition, the main sources of information on the Internet closely mirror the dominant sources in traditional media (Gibson et al., 2010).

The technology is still developing and, much like the advent of television, more time is needed before the wider effects of this media will be known.

2.6   Studies of referenda campaign advertising in New Zealand

There is a strong body of literature which considers the role of the media in democracies, political advertising campaigns, and the effects of the media's use of framing. In the New Zealand context, that scholarship includes Rudd, Hayward, and Craig (2009); Miller (2004), Vowles (2004), and Banducci & Karp (2003; 2002). A number of scholars have also provided commentary on specific aspects of the media environment in post-election literature, such as the chapters by Robinson, Clifton, Higgs, and Deo & Murchison in Johansson & Levine's the 2011 post-election book (Johannson & Levine, 2012). Research into advertising and referenda is a growing but new area of study, however little has been published to date on referendum campaign effects. There are no specific New Zealand-based studies regarding advertising and referenda, or studies more generally about media coverage and referenda in New Zealand. The literature on the 1993 electoral referendum primarily deals with the backers of the campaigns, funding limits, the official information campaign, and the "political colours" of the campaign (Aimer & Miller, 2002b; Levine & Roberts, 2010; McNabb, 2009).

In light of this, this research has drawn upon, and is grounded in, the wider fields of media effects and political communication research as well as the emerging body of research on referendum campaign effects.

Given the small number of studies on referenda campaign effects, political advertising theory provides a useful secondary source of research to draw on. New Zealand contributions to political advertising literature include Robinson (2004, 2006), Lees-Marshment (2009, 2012) and Rudd (2005).

In some cases political parties do align themselves with a particular policy option for referenda. This was the case in the 1993 electoral referendum, where the party

preferences were not always explicit, but the makeup of the lobby groups – i.e. the presence on business and union interests – meant the "political colours of the two camps were clear" (McNabb, 2009, p. 236). Furthermore, referendum campaign theorists such as LeDuc (2002, 2003) suggest than one of the main differences between election and referendum campaigns is that referendum campaigns have stronger effects. Political advertising theory provides a strong grounding in the methods of advertising as a persuasion tool, and the interaction between concepts of democracy and promotion of political ideas.

Drawing on theories of the democratic role of the media, political communication, and framing theory, this research adds to the literature on referenda and campaign advertising, with a focus on New Zealand. This research is a cross-discipline study, considering how advertising framed the discussion of the issues surrounding the choice of electoral systems in the 1993 and 2011 New Zealand electoral referenda.

3   Methodology

This thesis compares and contrasts the frames presented in advertising in the 1993 and 2011 New Zealand electoral referendum campaigns.

By examining how the issues surrounding the debate between electoral systems were framed, this research seeks to determine how advertising influenced voters' choice of electoral systems. Building on an assessment of advertising frames, the research seeks to evaluate the difference between the frames presented in the 1993 and 2011 referenda campaigns, to identify how each electoral system was portrayed, and whether the information provided was consistent with official information on the key aspects of these systems.

This chapter outlines the epistemological basis of this research, the criteria used for selecting advertising materials, the data collection process, how data was analysed, and the key assumptions and limitations of the methods used.

3.1   Epistemology

This research is grounded in a critical realist perspective. Critical realism can be seen as an attempt to blend the philosophies of interpretivism and positivism. While positivism considers our thinking and experiences to be constrained by the a fixed reality – the 'hard facts' of the world around us – and interpretivism considers our concept of 'reality' to be continually shaped by our thinking experiences (and may change at any time), critical realism posits that 'reality' is constructed through a combination of influences, including our individual thinking and experiences, and broader social and cultural influences. The broader social and cultural influences may change over time, but they change slowly, and the underlying influences "usually remain invisible or opaque to people as they go about their daily business" (Deacon, Pickering, Golding, & Murdock, 2007, p. 9). Critical realism research can be wide ranging, looking at how the overall social structure interacts with individuals experiences and the way they interpret the world. In this way, critical realism considers the point at which the overall structure and individuals interact, and the capacity of social/political actors to engage with (and therefore alter) the structure.

From this perspective, this research will look at the campaign advertisements surrounding electoral referenda with a view to better understanding not only the

specific content of the advertisements, but also how the advertisements drew on social and cultural concept to subtly influence voters' thinking.

In assessing how campaign advertising presented the issues of the 1993 and 2011 referenda, it is assumed that voters are influenced, at least to some extent, by the information provided by the media (Althaus et al., 2001; Banducci & Karp, 2003), and that they assess this information against broader social influences such as their socioeconomic position, identification with cultural groups, and approach towards individual or group-based decisions (Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992; and Koscki & McLeod, 1990, as cited in Scheufele, 1999, p. 105). It is also assumed that these influences are not fixed, and that the individual undertakes some level of critical assessment of the messages they are presented with.

3.2   Selection of material

The data sources for the research included print, video, digital, and audio advertising (pamphlets and press advertising such as magazine or newspaper advertisements, as well as television and online advertising) for both electoral referenda campaigns (the locations of these data are discussed in detail below). They included material created for a mass-market audience or a wide focus group, which was intended to be viewed by individuals who were not specifically seeking information on the referendum. Material such as correspondence addressed to specific individuals, editorials or opinion sections of newspapers, or the websites of each campaign were not included.

3.2.1   Campaigns

This research focuses primarily on the advertising campaigns of the two main referenda lobby groups in each referendum, which had national mass media campaigns.

While there were a number of campaigns from other lobby groups in the 1993[23] and 2011[24] referenda campaigns, this research has been restricted to the two main lobby groups for two reasons: these campaigns have the most advertising material

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[23] Based on material available in the National Library, these included groups such as the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, Public Service Association, Socialist Unity Party, Women's Electoral Lobby.

[24] These included groups such as the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, the Green Party, Sensible Sentencing Trust, and the New Zealand Union of Students' Associations (Robinson, 2006).

available for study; and as the main lobby groups were focused on mass market advertising, their advertising material is more accessible than groups that campaigned direct to their members or region.

For 1993, advertising material from the *ERC* (pro-MMP) and the *CBG* (pro-FPP) was selected. For 2011, advertising material from *CFM* (pro-MMP) and *VFC* (anti-MMP) was selected.

While the focus of this research is on the advertising material of the key lobby groups, in chapters 4 and 5 a summary of each of the official information campaigns run by the New Zealand Electoral Commission is also included, for contextual purposes.

3.2.2   Time period

In much the same way that election campaign advertising is subjected to financial restrictions, the 2011 referendum had a regulated period for advertising (26 August to 25 November 2011), during which expenditure on advertisements was restricted under the Electoral Referendum Act 2010 (New Zealand Electoral Commission, 2011b). However, the Electoral Referendum Act 1993 did not restrict campaign advertising, despite the financial restrictions that were in place for election campaign advertising at the time. As such, it is not feasible to restrict the selection of campaign advertising to the regulated advertising period of each referenda.

In order to ensure a similar breadth of material is selected for each campaign, all advertising related to the referenda that was produced in 1993 (up to 6 November 1993, the date of the 1993 referendum) and 2011 (up to 26 November 2011, the date of the 2011 referendum) has been included in this research.

3.2.3   Inclusion of online advertising

One of the largest changes in the advertising environment between 1993 and 2011 is the use of the Internet. While dial-up Internet access was available to academic institutions in New Zealand from as early as 1989 (McNabb, 2009), it wasn't until the mid-1990s that New Zealand saw the commercialisation of the Internet (Karel, 2003), with a large number of residential users beginning to purchase connections.

Online advertising started in 1994, well after the seconds and binding referendum in 1993 (Manheim, Rich, & Willnat, 2001).

While there was no digital advertising produced for the 1993 referendum, by 2011 the Internet was so ubiquitous that it is difficult to imagine an advertising campaign that would not use the Internet. This change in advertising mediums presents both a challenge in comparing the 1993 and 2011 campaigns, and an interesting case study of the changing way in which citizens seek information and advertisers present information. Digital advertising from the 2011 referendum campaign will be included in the formal data analysis set out in Chapter 5 below, and will be considered in the context of what information viewers were presented with, and how digital advertising has changed the way political information is provided.

3.3 Data collection

3.3.1 1993 electoral referendum

As the 1993 electoral referendum is a recent event in New Zealand political history, a large range of audiovisual and print advertising from the 1992 and 1993 electoral referenda is held within the Alexander Turnbull Library collection at the New Zealand National Library (examples of which are provided in Appendix 1). This information was presented to the National Library by key staff within the CBG and ERC campaigns. As a large amount of the advertising during the 1993 referendum was through broadcast television or radio and direct mail, the Alexander Turnbull Library provides the most accessible and comprehensive set of advertising from the time period.

All advertising from the National Library and National Film Archive that was produced in 1993 by the CBG and the ERC has been included in the material for this research.

This information has been cross-referenced against advertising material from the National Film Archive, and, where the advertising is not also in the National Library, has been included in the advertised material assessed in this research.

3.3.2 2011 electoral referendum

In the case of the 2011 referendum, the advertising material produced by the CFM and VFC campaigns has not yet been submitted to the National Library.

During 2011 I collected all advertising material I saw or received in the Wellington Central electorate, and kept digital records of the information provided on the two

campaign   websites   (www.campaignformmp.org.nz   and
www.voteforchange.org.nz[25]) (again, examples are provided in Appendix 1).

In order to ensure advertising material was of comparable breadth to the material to
the 1993 campaign, I contacted the campaign spokespeople from each group and
asked for copies of any advertising collateral they had retained from the campaigns.
Both CFM and VFC provided all material they had retained.

3.4 Data analysis

Consistent with the critical research paradigm, both qualitative and quantitative
research methods have been used in assessing the advertising (Burnham, 2008;
Deacon et al., 2007). McQuail (2000) elaborates on the potential this 'hybrid' of
methodologies offers - particularly with regard to assessing advertising or for
placing an analytical structure over semiotic analysis. By using both qualitative and
quantitative research methods, this research seeks to explore the deeper meaning
behind electoral referendum advertising, while placing the analysis alongside a
wider assessment of the dominant themes of the advertising. This combination of
research methods provides an opportunity to assess the content being presented
through existing structures (media channels) and institutions (lobby groups, the
government), and then also assess how this content is reinforcing or challenging
existing social and political beliefs.

An inductive approach to the quantitative data analysis method for this research was
used, based around content analysis using Ritchie and Lewis' (2003) thematic
analysis approach and McNabb's nine step analysis process (McNabb, 2009). This
includes:

1. Sorting and re-sorting material to establish patterns and structure. An
    inductive approach was used to assess the advertisements, developing a set
    of recurring themes, concepts, and/or signs, to categorise the main frames
    (and sub-frames, if necessary) that occur in the advertising through
    familiarisation with the material (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

    The recent guidance on electoral systems published by the New Zealand
    Electoral Commission (2011a) in preparation for the 2011 electoral
    referendum was used as a framework for categorising themes relating to

[25] This site has now closed, but a sample of the information available during 2011 is available
at: http://web.archive.org/web/20110723094552/http://www.voteforchange.org.nz/

structural features of an electoral system, such as whether an electoral system provides checks and balances on power, how voters are represented, and the ability of a government to enact its policy. Drawing on this guidance, the themes of Accountability, Effective Government, Effective Parliament, Proportionality, and Representation were adopted as codes for these major themes.

Depictions of the relationship between visual images and coding categories are provided in Appendix 2.

2. Clustering material based on identified themes.

3. Comparative analysis of themes to identify similarities and contrasts. This ensured that categories accurately capture the themes, and reduced duplication.

4. Re-coding of material. This ensured that original coding fit within the finalised themes, and that key features of each advertisement were captured by the codes (hereafter simply referred to as 'themes'). Second reiterative analysis also identified and corroborated links with the literature. This stage identified whether the data demonstrated links to existing political campaign and advertising theory (for example, the presence of 'othering' tactics, or negative campaign messages).

5. Development of theory from the analysis. The codification of keywords and tone of advertising material produced a set of themes which the advertising campaigns focused on. The advertising material was analysed by theme and campaign to produce a qualitative assessment of the advertising, drawing on semiotics and framing theory. Theories of what frames were present during the electoral referendum campaigns, and what messages were being presented by the advertisers, were then developed based on themes observed in the advertising.

Given the modest number of examples of campaign advertising produced for each referendum, all available advertising from each year's campaigns was analysed. The advertising material was indexed by theme (revising or adjusting the main themes where necessary) in a similar method to Baumgartner and Jones' study[26] of agenda

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[26] Baumgartner and Jones' study used content analysis to examine how issues were adopted in the media and the effect this may have had on policy issues, analysing magazine articles, classifying them by keywords, and whether the coverage was positive or negative.

setting in US politics (1993, as discussed in Burnham et al, 2008) to develop quantitative data on the frequency of each frame and its use throughout the campaign.

The qualitative assessment in this research was primarily informed by framing theory and media semiotics. Based on the literature on media as an enabler of democracy, campaign advertising, and framing effects theory, this research considers what the data suggests about the quality, tone and breadth of discussion about the two electoral systems. Further assessment compared the differences between the campaigns of 1993 and 2011, and considered what this suggests about our electoral system in 2011 and whether there are advantages or disadvantages to campaigning for the incumbent electoral system.

3.5 Key assumptions

As noted in Chapter 1, this assessment of campaign advertising for the 1993 and 2011 referenda is based on the assumption that voters are influenced by the information provided by the media, and that viewers assess this information against broader social influences (such as their socioeconomic position, identification with cultural groups, and approach towards individual or group-based decisions).

In this thesis it is also assumed that referendum campaign advertising was signed off by the campaign managers for each lobby group. While it can be expected that advertising agencies will have been involved in the preparation of some, if not all, of the advertising material, it is the campaign itself that has the final say on the content of the advertising. Robinson (2010, p. 30) states in her thesis exploring the market orientation of political advertising in New Zealand, that "as client the party is the one that bears the ultimate responsibility for the message". The party (as client) briefs the agency, approves all imagery, and signs off on the final content. All messages are signed off by the party. As such, while the advertising agency has a role in shaping the information in the advertisements, the ultimate responsibility for the frames chosen, and their content, is the person who commissioned the advertising. This principle is assumed to also apply to referendum advertising, with the campaign manager for the lobby group approving the final content of the advertising and therefore bearing ultimate responsibility for the message.

Robinson also raises a further point in her assessment regarding the design of campaign messages – that while some strategic decisions (e.g., what content is displayed, what issues to cover) can be deliberate, it is fair to assume that some

information or messages will be 'unconscious' (2010, p. 30). Not all signs and symbols are a deliberate attempt to evoke an underlying cultural meaning. While this research seeks to understand the information that was communicated to citizens through the referenda campaign rather than a strict assessment of what information the campaign groups intended to convey, this is particularly appropriate to note in this research given the heavy focus in semiotic analysis on signs and symbology. It is accepted here that not all of the information in the advertisements may have been deliberately chosen. However, by not deliberately excluding the imagery in the advertisements, it is explicitly assumed that it is likely that the respective campaigns supported the content (and underlying meaning) of their advertisements.

3.6 Limitations of the chosen method

Bignell (2002) identifies the potential ambiguity of the meanings of signs, and the possibility that other viewers might decode signs in advertising differently, as limiting factors of semiotic analysis.

A similar observation can be made of thematic analyses, which require the 'coder' to assess the data and decide on the themes. This can result in unreliable coding by the researcher or 'themes' that are not readily identified by the wider population (Weerakkody, 2009).

Shared meanings of signs develop through shared cultural and social environments. The lack of a universal set of signs with accepted meanings is consistent with the epistemology of critical realism. Signs and their meaning are constructed through a combination of influences, including our individual thinking and experiences, and broader social and cultural influences. The advertising of the electoral referenda was focused on the New Zealand voting public[27]. In this research, my identity as a New Zealand-born citizen presents a level of shared cultural understanding which has been draw upon to identify common New Zealand cultural signs and symbols.

Furthermore, the establishment of common New Zealand cultural concepts has been identified through various studies cited in this work. With the addition of quantitative methods of analysis, it is expected that the results of this work will be replicable, and can be further tested to assess coder bias at a later stage.

[27] It is important to note that the New Zealand voting public is made up of more than just adult New Zealand citizens. In New Zealand, permanent residents are also afforded the right to vote, so the New Zealand voting public includes foreign-born residents who do not have New Zealand citizenship (New Zealand Electoral Commission, 2013c).

To improve the reliability of coding processes, it is accepted practice for researchers to employ a second coder to reassess their work, and to gain a second opinion on the themes identified in their assessment. In this way, a researcher can compare the results of several researchers in order to find the level of intersubjective agreement, that is, the extent to which coders identify the same themes within the material (Jensen & Jankowski, 1991). Due to time and resource constraints, a second coder has not been used to verify coding and assessment of the data for this report.

However, specific consideration has been given to reducing coder bias and providing a replicable method for semiotic analysis.

The potential for coder bias has been somewhat mitigated through what Marks and Yardley refer to as the 'test-retest' reliability process (2004, as cited in Braun & Clark, 2006). Coding was reassessed by the original coder after a two week 'break', to ensure consistent coding of all material. In addition, the use of an inductive coding process reduces some of the possible bias of the coder's own expectations and assumptions about what will be present in the advertising. By developing the codes in response to the material, the coding is more likely to accurately reflect the content of the advertising than the use of a prescribed set of codes.

It is accepted, however, that as the data were assessed and analysed by one coder, some level of bias is likely to be present in the themes selected.

3.7 Summary

This chapter restated the purpose of this thesis, and outlined the methodological approach to addressing the research questions identified in Chapter 1.

The rationale for narrowing the scope of the thesis to focus on the print, video, digital, and audio advertising created by the two major lobby groups in each referendum was discussed. A time frame of all advertising produced in 1993 (up to 6 November 1993, the date of the 1993 referendum) and 2011 (up to 26 November 2011, the date of the 2011 referendum) related to the referenda has been identified as an equitable timeframe for comparing the advertising across two referenda. A methodological process which makes use of both qualitative and quantitative research methods, blending content analysis with framing theory and media semiotics was discussed, as well as the key underlying assumptions of with this research.

The following two chapters present the data for the 1993 and 2011 electoral referenda, and begin the process of analysing those data.

4 1993 Referendum Case Study Results and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This thesis compares and contrasts the frames presented in advertising in the 1993 and 2011 New Zealand electoral referendum campaigns. It explores what kind of information was available to voters about the impacts of a change in electoral system. It also assesses what aspects of the systems the information emphasised, with a particular focus on the information provided through the advertising campaigns run by lobby groups, during the 1993 and 2011 referenda.

This chapter is the first of three in which the results of data collection are presented and analysed. The compact nature of the data utilised in this research enables it to be clearly and succinctly presented in tabular form. In both this chapter and the next, therefore, the results of the data collection are first set out (see Tables 1 and 2), followed by an analysis of those data.

The data analysis in this chapter seeks to answer two of the four research questions[28] (see section 1.4, Chapter 1) in relation to the 1993 referendum: (1) What were the main themes the electoral referenda advertising focused on?; and (2) What aspects of the issues were given prominence in each referendum campaign?

The major themes identified in the content analysis are described, as well as the three overarching categories of themes that emerged from the content analysis. An examination of the frequency of both the overarching categories and individual themes is then presented.

In 1993, the key lobby groups were CBG (in support of maintaining the FPP system) and the ERC (in support of a change to the MMP system). For present purposes, these campaigns are assessed individually to identify which themes were most frequently apparent in the advertising materials and if there were themes used by one campaign that did not appear in the others' advertising.

4.2 The data

The data collected totalled 44 advertisements from two main lobby groups in the 1993 referendum - 25 from the ERC (MMP) campaign, and 19 for the CBG (FPP) campaign, and is presented below.

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[28] Chapter 6 addresses the third and fourth research questions.

4.2.1   Campaign for Better Government

Table 1: Campaign for Better Government data

#	title	type	format
5	Don't let the party games get out of control	pamphlet/flyer	mixed
6	CBG ad for Maori radio	radio advertisement	audio
7	Transcript of CBG radio ad	radio advertisement	audio (transcript)
9	I'm concerned about the darker side of MMP	pamphlet/flyer	text
10	I can't afford more MPs	pamphlet/flyer	mixed
11	We can't sell out	pamphlet/flyer	mixed
12	I do care about our future	pamphlet/flyer	mixed
13	Don't let the party games get out of control	pamphlet/flyer	mixed
25	First past the post	pamphlet/flyer	text
27	MMP: Did you know?	pamphlet/flyer	mixed
30	Options for better government	pamphlet/flyer	text
32	Caution: Chaos ahead	pamphlet/flyer	text
36	Referendum Review	pamphlet/flyer	mixed
38	MMP. It's not worth the risk	print advertisement (full-page)	text
39	For a glimpse into the future with MMP...	print advertisement (full-page)	mixed
40	If you don't understand MMP. Vote against it.	print advertisement (full-page)	text
41	MMP = more MPs	print advertisement (full-page)	mixed
42	Wanted: Hack, career politicians to make up numbers in parliament	print advertisement	text
43	New Zealand could become a nation of losers	print advertisement (full-page)	mixed

note: # refers to source data number.

Table 2: Electoral Reform Coalition data

#	title	type	format
1	We're counting on you!	print advertisement	text
2	Referendum '93 - Women and MMP	pamphlet/flyer	mixed
3	The real facts about MMP (1) (Yellow)	pamphlet/flyer	mixed
4	Footrot flats ad (Want a good reason for voting MMP?)	print advertisement	image
8	MMP - proportional representation	pamphlet/flyer	text
14	The real facts about MMP (2) (Green)	pamphlet/flyer	text
15	The real facts about MMP (3) (Pink)	pamphlet/flyer	text
16	The Electoral Reform Coalition	pamphlet/flyer	mixed
17	Why you should vote for MMP	pamphlet/flyer	mixed
18	MMP ma tagata samoa	pamphlet/flyer	text
19	MMP: voting for party lists	pamphlet/flyer	mixed
20	Vote MMP	pamphlet/flyer	mixed
21	Women & MMP	pamphlet/flyer	mixed
22	Why should I vote for MMP?	pamphlet/flyer	mixed
23	MMP and the economy	pamphlet/flyer	mixed
24	What is MMP?	pamphlet/flyer	mixed
26	For a fairer future	sticker	mixed
28	MMP	pamphlet/flyer	mixed
29	The real facts about MMP (4) (Blue)	pamphlet/flyer	text
31	Michael Laws on the MMP referendum	poster	mixed
33	Party lists: good or bad?	pamphlet/flyer	mixed
34	Vote MMP	sticker	text
35	First Past the Post (dinosaur)	poster	mixed
37	Put your tick in the right spot!	poster	mixed
44	I'd rather live in a democracy…	poster	text

note: # refers to source data number.

4.3 Major themes

As per the methodology outlined in Chapter 3, advertising material was assessed through an inductive approach, and a set of recurring themes were identified through familiarisation with the material.

These data were indexed by theme to develop quantitative data on the frequency of each theme and its use in the respective campaigns.

The themes were also aggregated into three over-arching categories: structure-based themes, results-based themes, and values-based themes (see Table 3).

Structure-based themes are themes that relate to the structure of the electoral system, and the direct outcomes of the structure. For example, the level of accountability, proportionality, or representation that the structure provides; or the relative simplicity or complexity of the system.

Results-based themes relate to the consequences (results) of a change in the electoral system for the wider social or economic environment. For example, the potential for negative effects for the economy, or the potential for a system to allow individuals to become power brokers.

Values-based themes are themes that assign specific values or ideologies to the different systems, such as the suggestion that one system is more consistent with egalitarian values than the other, or the characterisation of a campaign as 'outdated'.

The themes that emerged from the analysis of the data are set out in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Major Themes Identified

Structure	
Accountability	The extent to which a system enables voters to identify their elected representative(s) and hold elected officials to account, by withdrawing their support for an official or party in a future election.
Effective Government	The extent to which a system enables the government to act decisively, where appropriate, and the extent to which the system provides continuity and stability both within and between governments.
Effective Parliament	The extent to which a system enables elected representatives to scrutinise the Government's action, and influence policies (i.e. provide 'checks and balances' for the Government's actions).
Proportionality	The extent to which the proportion of votes a party receives translates to the share of seats a party receives in Parliament.
Representation	The extent to which the system fosters or explicitly provides mechanisms for representation of ethnic minorities, women, and/or representatives of different geographic areas to elected to Parliament.
Simplicity/Complexity	The extent to which a system is simple to understand, or complex, and the relative merits of having a more simplistic or complex system.
Cost of Systems	References to the administrative cost of a system, including the number of MPs under a system.
Results	
Hidden Power	The extent to which a system creates power brokers other than the lead party. This includes balance of power in coalitions (the relative power of coalition members), and the extent to which the government is controlled by party officials (rather than elected officials), including discussing of party involvement in the nomination of List MPs under MMP.
Change	Statements that evoke a need for change in and of itself.
Negative Consequences	The extent to which a system is deemed to have a negative effect on the wider social environment, economy, or future environment in New Zealand.
Values	
Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists	Statements that associate a system with a) 'everyday New Zealanders' or the working class or b) academic, political, or business elite, or the wealthy.
Outdated/Modern	The extent to which a system is said to be (or implied to be) modern or outdated.
Campaign Tactics	References to tactics of a campaign supporting a system, including commentary on the funders of organisers of a campaign, and how the campaign is being run.
Widespread Support	References to a system having 'widespread support', either domestically or internationally.

4.4 Themes observed

4.4.1 *Overarching categories of themes*

Over half of the total themes observed in the advertising material of both campaigns related to structural considerations (see Table 4).

Nearly a third of the ERC pro-MMP advertising and over half of the CBG advertising focused on structural themes. However, values-based themes were almost wholly used by the ERC. Only one advertisement from the CBG advertising included a value-based theme.

The overall volume of advertising produced by the campaigns appears to be fairly balanced, with 42 percent of the total number advertisements coming from the CBG, and 57 percent of advertisements being produced by the ERC.

Table 4: Total Overarching Themes - Count

	CBG	ERC	Grand Total
Structure	37	54	91
Results	26	12	38
Values	1	18	19
	64	84	148

Table 5: Total Overarching Themes - Percentage of Campaign Themes

	CBG	ERC	% of all themes
Structure	57.81%	64.29%	61.49%
Results	40.63%	14.29%	25.68%
Values	1.56%	21.43%	12.16%
	100%	100%	100%

4.4.2 Specific themes observed

Five of the themes observed in the advertising related to structural features such as whether a system provides checks and balances on power, how voters are represented, and the ability of a government to enact its policy. The recent guidance on electoral systems published by Elections New Zealand (in preparation for the 2011 electoral referendum) was used as a framework for categorising these features consistently (McNair, 2000). Following an inductive coding process, the five themes of Accountability, Effective Government, Effective Parliament, Proportionality, and Representation were adopted as a succinct way to convey these principles within the major themes. The other themes observed that relate to the structural features of different systems were Simplicity/Complexity, which speaks to the extent to which a system is simple or complex to understand and the relative merits of having a more simplistic or complex system; and commentary on cost of increasing the number of Members of Parliament (MPs). The latter issue was a particular feature of the 1993 referendum. The proposed number of MPs would remain at 99 if FPP was retained, with adjustments as population size or the Maori electoral roll size changed, but would increase to 120 MPs if the system changed to MMP, with adjustments as population size or the Maori electoral roll size changed or there was an overhang[29].

Themes relating to the results or outcomes that would be seen within the nation under a particular system include: the 'hidden power' of coalition partners, given the propensity for coalition government under MMP and a consideration of how MPs would be selected for party lists; Change (as a positive result in and of itself); and the potential for a particular system to result in negative consequences, adversely affecting the nation's future.

Finally, several themes associating particular values with a system were observed. These included statements that associate a system with 'everyday New Zealanders' or - alternatively – with the academic, political, or business elite, the extent to which a system is seen to be modern or outdated; references to the tactics of the opposing campaign/ers; and references to a system having 'widespread support', either domestically or internationally.

The total theme counts are set out in Table 6 below.

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[29] An 'overhang' in MMP is when "a party wins more electorate seats than it is entitled to by the overall share of the party vote" (New Zealand Electoral Referendum Panel, 1993), resulting in seats being added to Parliament in order to provide for electorate representation while still maintaining overall proportionality for the party votes.

Table 6: Total Theme Count

	CBG	ERC	total
Representation	8	16	24
Hidden Power	13	7	20
Accountability	9	9	18
Proportionality	0	16	16
Negative Consequences	13	1	14
Effective Government	6	8	14
Cost of Systems	9	4	13
Widespread Support	0	10	10
Simplicity/Complexity	4	0	4
Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists	1	3	4
Change	0	4	4
Campaign Tactics	0	3	3
Outdated/Modern	0	2	2
Effective Parliament	1	1	2
	64	84	148

Tables 6 and 7 demonstrate that while together Hidden Power and Representation constituted almost a third of all themes observed, Hidden Power was more commonly featured in CBG advertising, and Representation was more commonly featured in ERC advertising.

Over half of all themes observed belonged to one of four categories: Representation, Hidden Power, Accountability, or Proportionality. There were 10 separate remaining themes.

Table 7: Themes as Percentage of Total Themes Observed

	CBG	ERC	% of all themes
Representation	5.41%	10.81%	16.22%
Hidden Power	8.78%	4.73%	13.51%
Accountability	6.08%	6.08%	12.16%
Proportionality	0.00%	10.81%	10.81%
Negative Consequences	8.78%	0.68%	9.46%
Effective Government	4.05%	5.41%	9.46%
Cost of Systems	6.08%	2.70%	8.78%
Widespread Support	0.00%	6.76%	6.76%
Simplicity/Complexity	2.70%	0.00%	2.70%
Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists	0.68%	2.03%	2.70%
Change	0.00%	2.70%	2.70%
Campaign Tactics	0.00%	2.03%	2.03%
Outdated/Modern	0.00%	1.35%	1.35%
Effective Parliament	0.68%	0.68%	1.35%
	43.24%	56.76%	100%

Tables 6 and 7 demonstrate that while together Hidden Power and Representation constituted almost a third of all themes observed, Hidden Power was more commonly featured in CBG advertising, and Representation was more commonly featured in ERC advertising.

Over half of all themes observed belonged to one of four categories: Representation, Hidden Power, Accountability, or Proportionality. There were 10 separate remaining themes.

4.4.3   Themes within the campaigns

Despite a smaller number of total themes, when considering the spread of themes within the CBG's advertising, the campaign focused on a broad range of themes. These themes included Negative Consequences, Hidden Power, Accountability, Cost

of Systems, Representation, Effective Government, and Simplicity/Complexity[30] (see Table 8).

Over two thirds of all themes observed in the CBG campaign were from the four themes of Negative Consequences, Hidden Power, Accountability, and Cost of Systems. In addition, five of the themes observed in the ERC advertising were not present in the CBG advertising: Campaign Tactics, Widespread Support, Outdated/Modern, Change, and Proportionality.

The *CBG* also used a much smaller number of themes than the ERC, with only nine themes identified in the content analysis.

Table 8: Campaign for Better Government Themes

	count	% total campaign
Negative Consequences	13	20.31%
Hidden Power	13	20.31%
Accountability	9	14.06%
Cost of Systems	9	14.06%
Representation	8	12.50%
Effective Government	6	9.38%
Simplicity/Complexity	4	6.25%
Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists	1	1.56%
Effective Parliament	1	1.56%
Campaign Tactics	0	0.00%
Widespread Support	0	0.00%
Outdated/Modern	0	0.00%
Change	0	0.00%
Proportionality	0	0.00%

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[30] For the purposes of comparability across the two referenda and between campaigns, a theme was considered to be 'focused on' if the theme was present in more than 10 percent of total for sampled for a campaign's advertising.

The ERC campaign focused primarily on Proportionality, Representation, Widespread Support, and Accountability. Half of the themes observed in the ERC campaign were from the three themes of Proportionality, Representation, and Widespread Support (see Table 9).

The remaining themes observed covered 10 separate categories.

Only one theme – Simplicity/Complexity - featured in CBG advertisements but was not observed in ERC advertisements. In contrast, five themes featured ERC campaign advertisements that did not appear in CBG advertisements: Proportionality, Widespread Support, Change, Campaign Tactics, and Outdated/Modern.

Table 9: Electoral Reform Coalition Themes

	count	% total campaign
Proportionality	16	19.05%
Representation	16	19.05%
Widespread Support	10	11.90%
Accountability	9	10.71%
Effective Government	8	9.52%
Hidden Power	7	8.33%
Change	4	4.76%
Cost of Systems	4	4.76%
Campaign Tactics	3	3.57%
Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists	3	3.57%
Outdated/Modern	2	2.38%
Negative Consequences	1	1.19%
Effective Parliament	1	1.19%
Simplicity/Complexity	0	0.00%

4.4.4   Common themes between campaigns

Overall, the four most frequently observed themes were: 1) Representation, 2) Hidden Power, 3) Accountability, and 4) Proportionality. The themes of hidden power and representation were featured in the five most frequently observed themes in each campaign. Hidden Power was one of the two most frequently mentioned themes in CBG advertising, while Representation was one of the two most frequently mentioned themes in the ERC campaign. The CBG advertising did not feature the theme of Proportionality at all, while proportionality was mentioned in more than half of the ERC advertising material (see Table 6).

While it is not surprising, given that these issues speak to the differences between the structures of the MMP and FPP voting systems, this suggests that there was no 'counter-message' presented to these themes by the other lobby group.

The theme of 'Change' also emerged as a code for advertising that appealed to the audience to vote for the system that offers change, without any elaboration on why change was preferable. The Change theme is unique in the themes observed in the advertising material, as it refers to the immediate result of shifting to a new electoral system ('change'), but not a long-term result. It also contained no information on why 'change' is a good idea. While it could be argued that 'change' is generally viewed as a positive result (as voters wouldn't seek change if they were happy with the status quo), more recent political campaigns that have also appealed to the public to VFC followed this statement with an example of what 'change' will result in.

For example, in the United States, 'change' was a frequent slogan of President Obama's 2008 electoral campaign (Grunwald, 2008; Nakamura, 2012), but was usually followed with a statement, such as "Change you can believe in", evoking concepts such as a change to a trustworthy president, or change that will bear results. In New Zealand, the National Party's 2008 electoral campaign also urged voters "It's time to change. Party Vote National and Choose a Bright Future" (Laughey, 2007).

The theme of 'campaign tactics' captured campaign strategy messages used in advertising, such as commentary on how a campaign was being run, or the credentials or characters of those running the campaign[31].

4.5   Frames observed in themes

While the themes specified in the previous section identify the concepts the advertising is referring to (e.g. Accountability, Proportionality, Simplicity/Complexity), the frames are the way the campaigns "select and highlight some features of reality and obscure others in a way that tells a consistent story about problems, their causes, moral implications, and remedies". For example, the frames that are used to present information to voters can suggest what the key elements of an issue are, relate a theme to the voter's daily life, or associate a particular moral or cultural concept with a theme.

The *ERC* advertising focused on the themes of Proportionality, Representation, Widespread Support, and Accountability.

The campaign focused on the following frames when mentioning these themes:

1. Proportionality: The potential for proportional systems producing more 'fair' results – representing the voice of the voter by providing each party with a share of votes in Parliament that is proportional to its support among voters (provided the party reaches either of the two thresholds required for seats in the House: a single electoral seat, or passing the five percent party vote threshold).

2. Representation: The potential for increased diversity and representation of minority interests through party lists, the MMP party vote, and the increased propensity for coalition governments under MMP.

3. Widespread support: References to the use of the MMP system in other jurisdictions, the use of other similar electoral systems (e.g. proportional representation systems), or imagery that implies MMP has widespread support domestically.

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[31] Note a distinction is made here between references to social groups and individuals involved in a campaign, and individuals or social groups represented by the electoral system. The 'Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists' theme refers to statements that associate an electoral system with a particular social group, while the 'campaign tactics' theme refers to the credentials or character of those directly involved in the campaign for MMP or FPP.

4. Accountability: The ability to vote out a major party, as the MMP system improves the likelihood that a minority party will be represented in Parliament, increasing the value of a vote to a minority party.

The CBG advertising, on the other hand, focused on the themes of Negative Consequences, Hidden Power, Accountability, Cost of Systems, Representation, Effective Government, and Simplicity/Complexity. It focused on the following frames when mentioning these issues:

1. Negative Consequences: The potential for the MMP system to cause negative effects to the New Zealand economy, and the potential for a change in systems to have general negative consequences for the social environment/quality of life in New Zealand.

2. Hidden Power: The influence of the political party (rather than individual MPs) on party policy under the party list system, and the potential for list MPs to be nominated due to their reputation within the party rather than their service as an electorate MP. Also, the overrepresentation of minority voices in Government, due to the need to form coalitions under MMP.

3. Accountability: The presence of 'unelected' list MPs (i.e., the individual concerned was not specifically elected) under the party list system, and the inability of the public to vote that MP out.

4. Cost of Systems: The increase in MPs under an MMP system creating a burden on the New Zealand taxpayer.

5. Representation: The benefits of representation at a local level, through an electorate MP, and how FPP provides this representation. In particular, the strength of FPP (where all seats are electorate seats) over MMP (where over half the seats are electorate seats, and the remaining seats are party/list seats) in providing geographic representation. Also, the ability to push through policy under an FPP system providing positive benefits for progressing Maori issues.

6. Effective Government: The ability of the government to implement policy under the FPP system, given the governing party will always have the majority of votes in Parliament, and the stability this provides. Also, the relative instability of MMP governments, due to coalition partners having

competing interests and having to negotiate votes within parliament to pass legislation.

7. Simplicity/Complexity: The potential for the relative complexity of the MMP system creating confusion with voters, and the simplicity of the FPP system.

4.6 Summary

In this chapter, an introduction was given outlining the methodology used for the content analysis of the 1993 referendum advertising, and a profile of the data gathered through the search process was provided. Those data were subsequently analysed with a view to establishing the major themes present within them. That data analysis forms the foundation of this research's assessment of the frames presented in advertising in the 1993 and 2011 New Zealand electoral referendum campaigns.

Content analysis identified 14 separate themes, which were summarised under the overarching categories of "structural-based themes", "results-based themes", and "values-based themes". These overarching categories were used to assess the overall focus of the advertising, which predominantly focused on themes that relate to the structure of the electoral system and the direct outcomes of the structure.

Results from the content analysis of the first case study identified that the ERC advertising covered a broad range of themes, but the majority of its advertising addressing focused primarily on the themes of Proportionality, Representation, Widespread Support, and Accountability. In contrast, the CBG used fewer themes overall, but focused on a broad range of themes within its advertising material, including Negative Consequences, Hidden Power, Accountability, the Cost of Systems, Representation, Effective Government, and Simplicity/Complexity.

The themes of Hidden Power and Representation were featured in the five most frequently observed themes in each campaign.

Common themes between the campaigns, and the frames used for these themes were identified and discussed, and it was observed that where campaigns have used the same theme, they used markedly different frames for the issues.

The next chapter will present and analyse the data collected from the 2011 referendum case study. Following this, a full analysis of the themes that run across the 1993 and 2011 campaigns is presented in Chapter 6.

5 2011 Referendum Case Study Results and Analysis

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, an analysis of 1993 referendum advertising materials was provided. This chapter provides a comparable analysis of the 2011 referendum advertising. Both this chapter and the preceding one provide the basis for the assessment of the frames presented in advertising from the 1993 and 2011 New Zealand electoral referendum campaigns which follows in Chapter6.

As in Chapter 4, the data is both presented in tabular form, and then a preliminary analysis is presented, with a focus on the first two of the four research questions: (1) What were the main themes the electoral referenda advertising focused on?, and (2) What aspects of the issues were given prominence in each referendum campaign?.

5.2 The data

The data collected totalled 26 advertisements from two main lobby groups in the 2011 referendum −10 from VFC (anti-MMP), and 16 from the CFM (MMP), and are presented below.

5.2.1 *Vote for Change*

Table 10: Vote For Change data

#	title	type	format
8	How will you vote in the referendum?	pamphlet/flyer	text
9	SM - The Smart Move	pamphlet/flyer	mixed
10	Trust MMP? NO	digital advertisement	mixed
11	Trust Winston to choose the next PM?	billboard	mixed
12	Only dogs are meant to wag tails	digital advertisement	mixed
13	MMP: two-faced?	digital advertisement	mixed
14	Your choice, not his!	digital advertisement	mixed
15	Where will MMP take you next?	digital advertisement	mixed
16	Restore Sanity and Vote for Change	digital advertisement	mixed
24	John Key is voting to get rid of MMP	print advertisement	mixed

note: # refers to source data number.

Table 11: Campaign for MMP data

#	title	type	format
1	MMP is fairer	pamphlet/flyer	mixed
2	MMP - make your vote count	pamphlet/flyer	text
3	MMP: "It's Fair Play"	print advertisement	mixed
4	Why I support MMP: Anton Oliver	print advertisement	mixed
5	MMP gives power to people like you	poster	mixed
6	MMP - keep the power of your votes	pamphlet/flyer	mixed
7	MMP - make your vote count	poster	text
17	Every vote counts	radio advertisement	audio
18	Let's go forwards, not backwards	radio advertisement	audio
19	I'm voting to keep MMP	radio advertisement	audio
20	Let's not go backwards	radio advertisement	audio
21	Let's keep MMP and make it even better	radio advertisement	audio
22	Let's keep MMP, review it, and make it better	radio advertisement	audio
23	MMP gives power to the people	digital advertisement	text
25	MMP - so your votes count	billboard	text
26	MMP gives power to New Zealanders like you	billboard	mixed

note: # refers to source data number.

5.3 Themes observed

5.3.1 Overarching categories of themes

The three over-arching categories identified in the 1993 case study assessment (relating to structure, results, and values) have also been used to categories the 2011 advertising themes[32]. Just under half of the total themes observed in the advertising related to structural concepts (see Tables 12 and 13). While nearly a third of the CFM's advertising focused on structure-based themes, two thirds of the VFC themes

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[32] The three over-arching categories of structure-based themes, results-based themes, and values-based themes were identified in the inductive coding process used for the 1993 referendum case study. Further information on the development of these categories is provided in Chapter 4, section 4.4.1.

were results-based themes. In comparison, none of the CFM advertising featured results-based themes.

The difference between the respective campaigns in the distribution of these in over-arching themes suggests there were two very different campaigns focusing on entirely different concepts in 2011.

The CFM produced slightly more advertising than the VFC campaign, but each campaign produced roughly half of the total advertising collected. The CFM produced 56 percent of the total advertising material, and 43 percent of advertising was from the VFC campaign.

Table 12: Total Overarching Themes - Count

	VFC	CFM	Grand Total
Structure	5	20	25
Results	16	0	16
Values	3	11	14
	24	31	55

Table 13: Total Overarching Themes - Percentage of Campaign Themes

	VFC	CFM	% of total themes
Structure	20.83%	64.52%	45.45%
Results	66.67%	0.00%	29.09%
Values	12.50%	35.48%	25.45%
	100%	100%	100%

5.3.2   Specific themes observed

Six themes related to the structural features of electoral systems (Accountability, Effective Government, Effective Parliament, Proportionality, Representation, and Simplicity/Complexity) were again present in the 2011 advertising material. On the

other hand, the 1993 structural theme 'Cost of Systems' was not observed in any of the 2011 advertising.

The same themes relating to the outcomes of different systems and how systems affect the operation of Parliament were observed in the data concerning the 2011 referendum including, for example, the propensity for coalition government and the negotiation this could require with coalition partners ('Hidden Power'), and the unintended consequences that coalition governments may bring.

Support of a proportional system was observed, as well as statements that characterised a particular system as either modern or outdated, and a call for 'change'[33].

Table 14: Total Theme Count

	VFC	CFM	total
Proportionality	0	13	13
Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists	1	8	9
Hidden Power	8	0	8
Change	7	0	7
Representation	2	3	5
Outdated/Modern	0	3	3
Widespread Support	2	1	3
Accountability	2	0	2
Simplicity/Complexity	1	1	2
Effective Government	0	2	2
Effective Parliament	0	2	2
Negative Consequences	1	0	1
	24	33	57

Tables 14 and 15 demonstrate that there were a number of themes that featured prominently in one campaign, while not being used in the other campaign. For

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[33] As noted in Chapter 4, this code is unique, as it refers to a short-term outcome, rather than a long-term outcome - appealed to the audience to vote for the system that offers change, without any elaboration on why change was preferable.

example, Proportionality was the most common theme observed in all 2011 referendum advertising, but this theme was only used by the Campaign for MMP. Likewise, Hidden Power and Change are also strongly featured in the total number of themes across all advertising, but these themes were only used by VFC.

As with the overarching categories of themes, this suggests two very different campaigns with only a small number of themes being used in both sets of advertising.

Proportionality, Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists, Hidden Power, and Change constitute over half the themes observed.

Table 15: Total Themes by Percentage

	VFC	CFM	total
Proportionality	0.00%	22.81%	22.81%
Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists	1.75%	14.04%	15.79%
Hidden Power	14.04%	0.00%	14.04%
Change	12.28%	0.00%	12.28%
Representation	3.51%	5.26%	8.77%
Outdated/Modern	0.00%	5.26%	5.26%
Widespread Support	3.51%	1.75%	5.26%
Accountability	3.51%	0.00%	3.51%
Simplicity/Complexity	1.75%	1.75%	3.51%
Effective Government	0.00%	3.51%	3.51%
Effective Parliament	0.00%	3.51%	3.51%
Negative Consequences	1.75%	0.00%	1.75%
	42.11%	57.89%	100%

5.3.3 Themes within the campaigns

Of the twelve themes identified, both campaigns only featured eight themes in their campaign advertising. Hidden Power and Change constituted over half the themes identified in VFC advertising. The remaining themes observed were Accountability, Widespread Support, Representation, Negative Consequences, Everyday New

Zealanders/Elitists, and Simplicity/Complexity. The themes of Outdated/Modern, Effective Government, Proportionality, and Effective Parliament did not feature in any VFC advertising (see Table 16).

Like the VFC campaign, over half of CFM's advertising focused on two themes. However, instead of Hidden Power and Change, the two main themes were Proportionality and Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists.

The remaining themes observed in the CFM's advertising were Accountability, Widespread Support, Representation, Negative Consequences, Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists, and Simplicity/Complexity.

The themes of Accountability, Change, Negative Consequences, and Hidden Power did not feature in any CFM advertising (see Table 17).

Table 16: Vote for Change Themes

	count	% total campaign
Hidden Power	8	33.33%
Change	7	29.17%
Accountability	2	8.33%
Widespread Support	2	8.33%
Representation	2	8.33%
Negative Consequences	1	4.17%
Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists	1	4.17%
Simplicity/Complexity	1	4.17%
Outdated/Modern	0	0.00%
Effective Government	0	0.00%
Proportionality	0	0.00%
Effective Parliament	0	0.00%

Table 17: Campaign for MMP Themes

	count	% total campaign
Proportionality	13	39.39%
Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists	8	24.24%
Representation	4	9.09%
Outdated/Modern	3	9.09%
Effective Government	2	6.06%
Effective Parliament	2	6.06%
Widespread Support	1	3.03%
Simplicity/Complexity	1	3.03%
Accountability	0	0.00%
Change	0	0.00%
Negative Consequences	0	0.00%
Hidden Power	0	0.00%

5.3.4   Common themes between campaigns

Overall, the five most frequently observed themes were: 1) Proportionality, 2=) Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists, 2=) Hidden Power 3) Change, and 4) Representation (see Table 14).

Both campaigns featured theme of Representation featured in their five most frequently featured themes.

However, of the five most frequently featured themes in each campaign, three in particular stand out as forming a strong part of one campaign, but not being featured in the other campaign at all. Hidden Power was mentioned in a third of all VFC advertising, but this theme was note observed in the CFM advertising (i.e. no specific mention of this theme was made as a counter-response to anti-MMP advertising). 29 percent of the themes observed in VFC advertising related to Change, a theme which was not present in any of the CFM advertising. In the CFM campaign, more than a third of all advertising mentioned Proportionality, which was not mentioned in the VFC advertising. Proportionality, in particular, is a key

difference between the structures of proportional systems like MMP and several of the alternative systems (e.g. the plurality-based FPP or partially-proportional Supplementary Member systems), and Change is a theme which logically suits a non-incumbent campaign (or concept) better than an incumbent.

The name of the campaign for an alternative voting system (Vote for Change) also affected the count of Change themes, as this was present in almost all advertising from this campaign.

5.4 Frames observed in themes

The CFM advertising focused on the themes of Proportionality, Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists, Representation.

The CFM focused on the following themes when framing these issues:

1. Proportionality: Proportionality as a positive outcome of the MMP system, which provides all parties with a 'fair go' at getting seats in Parliament. Also, the potential for proportional systems producing more 'fair' results – representing the voice of the voter by providing each part with a proportional share of votes in Parliament.

2. Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists: suggestions that the MMP system is more representative of middle-class New Zealand values (often linking this with outcomes of proportionality and minority representation), or the inference that elite groups supporting FPP means FPP is likely to be more beneficial for elite groups.

3. Representation: The ability of party lists to support the representation of women and ethnic minorities, and the ability for minority parties to join coalitions to improve minority representation, as evidenced by an increase in minority representation since the introduction of MMP.

The VFC advertising focused on the themes of Hidden Power and Change.

The VFC campaign focused on the following themes when framing these issues:

1. Hidden Power: The overrepresentation of minority voices in Government, due to the need to form coalitions under MMP, results in minority parties having excessive control over coalition formation and government. Also, the influence of a political party (rather than individual MPs) on party policy under the party list system, and the potential for list MPs to be nominated

due to their reputation within the party rather than their service as an electorate MP.

2. Change: That a vote against retaining MMP would deliver change, which is presented as a positive outcome in and of itself.

5.5 Summary

In this chapter, a short introduction was given outlining the content analysis of the 2011 referendum advertising. This data analysis forms the second half of this research's assessment of the frames presented in advertising in the 1993 and 2011 New Zealand electoral referendum campaigns.

Content analysis identified 13 separate themes, which were again summarised under the overarching categories of "structural-based themes", "results-based themes", and "values-based themes". These overarching categories were established in the assessment of 1993 referendum advertising in Chapter 4, to assess the overall focus of the advertising for each campaign.

Results from the content analysis of the second case study identified a strong difference between the two campaigns' themes. Both the overarching categories and specific themes used in the two campaigns were different, and several themes featured in one campaign, but not the other.

While nearly a third of the CFM advertising focused on structure-based themes, two thirds of all VFC themes were campaign focused results-based themes. None of the CFM advertising featured results-based themes.

Hidden Power and Change constituted over half the themes identified in VFC advertising, while over half of the CFM' advertising focused on the two themes of Proportionality and Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists. Proportionality was only used in the CFM, and the Hidden Power and Change themes were only used by VFC.

As with the overarching categories of themes, this suggests two very different campaigns with only a small number of themes being used in both sets of advertising. The difference in overarching and specific themes suggests there were two very different campaigns focusing on very different concepts in 2011.

Taken together, this chapter and the preceding chapter have presented the results of data collection and a preliminary analysis of this data. The next chapter focuses on comparing the 1993 and 2011 case studies. Specifically, the discussion will address

the third and fourth of the questions guiding this research: (3) - what themes were used by more than one referendum campaign?, (4) - how did each campaign position itself in relation to the other(s)?.

This data will then be used to draw conclusions regarding the difference between the frames presented in the 1993 and 2011 referenda campaigns, how each electoral system was portrayed, and how advertising was used to frame the discussion of the issues in the 1993 and 2011 New Zealand electoral referenda.

6 Discussion

6.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapters, the presentation and content analysis of data have been provided. This chapter begins with a summary of the changes in the political environment between 1993 and 2011, and is followed by the major findings regarding what kind of information was presented to voters in the major advertising campaigns of the 1993 and 2011 electoral referenda. The chapter then focuses on the third and fourth of the questions guiding this research: (3) - what themes were used by more than one referendum campaign?, and (4) - how did each campaign position itself in relation to the other(s)?. These questions are addressed through an examination of the two case studies and the information provided by the official government information campaigns.

Based on the content and framing analysis, further consideration is given to the common themes and how they were presented. Media semiotics is then used to discuss the particular signs and symbols used to frame the information presented in the advertising material. Finally, the way the decision has been framed by the two major lobby groups for each referendum and how this information may have affected voters' decisions is discussed in the context of media effects theory.

6.2 From 1993 to 2011

Any attempt to compare and contrast two referenda campaigns separated by almost two decades must be mindful of the changes that have taken place over that time. In the case of the 1993 and 2011 electoral referenda, several significant changes have occurred in the intervening years.

In the first instance, a number of changes to the structure of the lobby groups occurred between 1993 and 2011. The FPP/anti-MMP campaign found itself shifting from a role as defender of the incumbent system, to a challenger to the status quo. The MMP campaigns retained some of the founding members between 1993 and 2011, and a significant amount of institutional knowledge of what worked and what didn't in 1993 was retained (Grey & Fitzsimons, 2012). On the other hand, VFC appeared to be on the back foot from day one; a challenger with five alternatives in its back pocket and few of the old guard remaining.

Spending by lobby groups to promote the 2011 referendum was a tenth of what was spent in the 1993 referendum. While the 1993 referendum did not have a spending

cap and the 2011 referendum did, the low level of spending appears to be a reflection of the general disinterest in the 2011 referendum.

In both 1993 and 2011 the campaigns had MPs who spoke out in support of their position[34], but no political party explicitly aligned itself with one of the referendum options. However, the 1993 referendum was held – somewhat reluctantly - in response voter demands, whereas the 2011 referendum was initiated by government without any clear call for change from the voters. In 1993, the electoral referendum was situated in the midst of an environment that Arseneau and Roberts characterised as "anger, betrayal, and ineptitude" (2012, p. 325). In contrast, the 2011 electoral referendum was held during a period of relative stability. Despite a rocky start to the MMP system in 1996, the electoral system had delivered over ten years of stable government. New Zealand had just successfully hosted the seventh Rugby World Cup, and the New Zealand All Blacks won the event for the first time since 1987 (Arseneau & Roberts, 2012).

There were also tumultuous events leading up to the election – the first term of the Fifth National Government reads like a study in disaster politics, with an extended recession caused by the 2008 global financial crisis, the Pike River Mine disaster, and the 2011 Christchurch Earthquake all occurring within the space of just three years. However, with the exception perhaps of the Pike River Mine disaster, these events were caused by external factors rather than the actions of government. The National Government was well-regarded heading into the 2011 election (Garner, 2011; Roy Morgan Research, 2011b; Young, 2011) and there was little of the discontent at the systems of government that was visible in the lead-up to the 1993 referendum.

The coverage of the Rugby World Cup affected advertising for the election and referendum, with most parties and lobby groups reducing the volume of advertising or choosing to defer their advertising until the five week period following the final World Cup game on 23 October 2011 (Grey & Fitzsimons, 2012; Robertson, 2012; Turei, 2012), despite the regulated period for advertising beginning on 26 August 2011. Perhaps, as Arseneau and Roberts suggest (2012, p. 331), "the last thing on people's minds was politics, let along the minutiae of five voting systems" when there was a World Cup to win.

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[34] For example, Simon Bridges and John Key supported Supplementary Member in the 2011 referendum.

6.3 **1993 Electoral Referendum campaign**

6.3.1 Summary of results

The *CBG* campaign focused on a broad range of themes, including: Negative Consequences, Hidden Power, Accountability, Cost of Systems, representation, Effective Government, and Simplicity/Complexity. The *ERC* campaign focused primarily on Proportionality, Representation, Widespread Support, and Accountability.

Only one theme – Simplicity/Complexity - featured in CBG advertisements that were not observed in ERC advertisements. In contrast, five themes featured ERC campaign advertisements that did not appear in CBG advertisements: Proportionality, Widespread Support, Change, Campaign Tactics, and Outdated/Modern.

While the theme of Change deals with outcomes that only an MMP system would provide, it is notable that the other themes were not featured in the CBG advertising. In particular, it is surprising that the Widespread Support theme was not used in CBG advertising. Despite the indicative referendum in 1992 favouring a formal referendum on changing the electoral system, FPP was the incumbent system and was in place in many other countries at the same time.

CBG advertising could also have contrasted the ERC campaign's framing of the FPP system as outdated (and MMP as modern) with advertising portraying FPP as 'traditional', or with a long history. While the FPP campaign may have considered these themes to be of lesser importance, another possibility is that the FPP campaign did not create reactive campaign messages in response to the ERC campaign advertising.

Simplicity/Complexity did not feature in the CBG campaign's advertising. While the Simplicity/Complexity frames do tend to favour FPP as the more simple system[35]

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[35] The MMP system could be portrayed as complex based on the two-vote system alone, though the formula required to apportion seats after the election, and the increased likelihood of coalition governments also adds to the perceived complexity of the system.

(assuming simplicity is what voters want), the lack of a counter-argument to the "simple is best" frame presented in CBG advertising showed is notable[36].

The different sources of funding and priorities of two lobby groups were visible in the advertising themes. ERC advertisements which featured the Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists theme proposed the MMP system supported the interests of 'everyday New Zealanders', while the FPP system represented the political, or business elite and the wealthy. These advertisements often also featured the Campaign Tactics theme, claiming that corporate funding of the CBG campaign was evidence that FPP system represented (wealthy) business interests.

While the main issues observed in the advertising from each campaign were very similar, the campaigns framed these issues in different ways.

Effective Government, defined as the extent to which a system enables a government to act decisively where appropriate, and the level of continuity and stability both within and between governments, was featured in six advertisements (9.38 percent) from CBG campaign advertising, and eight advertisements (9.52 percent) from ERC campaign advertising. The CBG campaign framed the issue of effective government as a choice between a government that is able to react swiftly to concerns of the time, and effectively implement legislative changes, in contrast to the MMP system, which would be restricted in its ability to act due to the need to consult with coalition partners, or shop its policies around Parliament ensure it had sufficient votes to enact legislation. The ERC campaign framed the issue of effective government in terms of the stability that coalition governments can offer, claiming that the need to negotiate with coalition partners or gain the wider support of Parliament to pass legislation the MMP system encourages more centrist policies (i.e. a process that supports policy moderation).

Representation accounted for 12.50 percent and 19.05 percent of the themes for the CBG and ERC campaigns respectively (n=8; n=16). The CBG campaign focused on the importance of having an electorate representative that was involved at a local level, and was approachable (by their proximity to the voter). In contrast, the ERC campaign focused on the options that MMP offered – enabling voters to vote for who they considered to be the best local representative, as well as the party they

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[36] While all MMP advertising could be said to be showing what is better about a more complex system, there was no advertisements that specifically addressed the simplicity/complexity argument, or acknowledged the perception that MMP was a more complex system.

wish to see in Parliament, rather than have to make a choice between picking a representative from a party in line with their ideological views, or a representative that would promote their region's interests (but may not align with the voter's ideological views). The ERC campaign also focused on the benefits of the list system in increasing diversity in Parliament, providing further options for the representation of minority interests and the number of female MPs.

Along with Negative Consequences, Hidden Power was the most common theme in CBG advertising. The theme of hidden power was present in 13 samples of CBG advertising (20.31 percent) and 7 samples of ERC advertising (8.33 percent). In CBG advertising, the Hidden Power theme was framed as a negative consequence of the MMP system, creating an environment where minority interests and small parties could gain a disproportionate level of power in Government. Advertising suggested that under the MMP system, politics would be less transparent, with 'faceless politicians' being controlled and rewarded by party leadership rather than the voter.

The ERC used the theme of Hidden Power primarily to frame counter-messages to portrayal of List MPs as 'party hacks' in CBG advertisements. The ERC campaign explicitly created a counter frame to this advertising, with set questions or statements that were then responded to with a counter-message. For example, pamphlets had phrases such as "Shirtcliffe says party list MPs won't be directly elected by the voters" and questions like "Will the lists be filled with 'party hacks'?". The counter-message then framed party lists and coalition negotiations as democratic processes where the voter had more control – the ability to vote for party separately from the vote for electorate representation, democratic selection of list MPs, and the ability for list MPs to provide diversity.

Accountability used very similar frames to those for hidden power, drawing again on concerns about whether list MPs and small parties in coalitions would be accountable. The ERC campaign again used this theme in a reactive manner, with a question and response format, and the frame of MMP being a system that upholds democratic principles. This advertising emphasised that there would be more possible combinations of parties that could govern under MMP, which was preferable to the defacto two party system that FPP creates (Riker, 1982). Advertising also focused on the benefits of having more parties in Parliament - i.e. increasing the checks and balances on government power, shown through the Effective Parliament theme).

A strong feature of the advertising was the effect of introducing list MPs under MMP, portrayed through the themes of representation, hidden power, and accountability. CBG campaign advertising for these themes promoted the image of 'faceless politicians' and 'party hacks' being included in the list as a reward for their loyalty to the party. The CBG campaign proposed this would have a negative effect on accountability, as a voter could attempt to "vote out" an electorate politician only to see them return to Parliament as a list MP.

In comparison, where ERC advertising included commentary on the effect of introducing list MPs to Parliament, their advertising focused on the positive effect party lists could have on increasing minority representation in Parliament, and countered arguments of 'faceless politicians' by stating that electoral legislation would require party lists to be published prior to elections.

6.3.2 Electoral Reform Coalition advertising - themes and frames

The ERC campaign focused on the themes of proportionality, representation, widespread support, and accountability.

In highlighting these themes as the key issues at stake in the referendum campaign, the ERC's MMP advertising used the images 'everyday New Zealanders' and text that implied widespread support for the MMP system (for example, references to the 1992 referendum result, and other countries who have adopted proportional representation system). The advertising drew on the social myths of 'David and Goliath' and big business against the working class, as its frames for the campaign. In this way, the ERC campaign created a 'brand' for what MMP stands for, and what kind of voter supports MMP. This was also supported by references to the 'fairness' of a proportional system, where votes are directly transferred into seats in Parliament.

The figures used in the ERC advertising were portrayed in casual or working-class clothing, rather than professional clothing, or drew on imagery such as local beaches to evoke a sense of the everyday and of community. This is also exemplified through the two ERC advertising samples that used images from popular media. Popular culture images featured in the ERC campaign were of Wallace Footrot, from *Footrot Flats*, a cartoon about a rural farmer and his dog, and of 'Spot', a dog from the from Telecom New Zealand's advertising. Spot featured as the family dog for commercials promoting the services of Telecom, one of New Zealand's largest businesses. Spot's image (or the image of a dog resembling Spot), was used in an ERC flier, drawing

parallels between New Zealand 'family values', and those represented by the MMP system. The use of Spot establishes a juxtaposition between Spot the 'family dog' and his representation of family values, and Peter Shirtcliffe (the Chair of Telecom), Telecom, and the interests of big business.

Through characterising FPP supporters as 'big business', and the 'elite', MMP was framed as the system that stands for the working class, thus creating "a binary of 'us' and 'them'" (Stanyer, 2007, p. 123). By defining the group in opposition to 'others' the campaign appeals to the shared identity of its audience. The use of rhetoric, and the resulting 'othering' of non-target voters, shifted the media discussion of politics away from more complex policy discussions, and towards simpler ideologies and discussion of 'issues' that more easily fitted within the binary of for/against, or us/them.

This representation of 'everyday New Zealanders' was also reflected in the grassroots nature of the campaign. A number of the advertisements regarding MMP were printed in union publications, or supported by union resources (Stevenson, 2002). Fundraising for the ERC campaign was focused at the individual level, and the majority of advertising material was simply prepared, with hand-drawn imagery, suggesting the material had been prepared without the use of an advertising company.

Together, this frame on the themes of Proportionality, Representation, and Widespread Support, promoted MMP as a system that was fair, and served the values of everyday New Zealanders (and had the widespread support of everyday New Zealanders). It framed MMP as a system that would create stable and effective government while holding politicians ('the elites') to account for their election promises and actions.

Through using images of Kate Sheppard (the face of the New Zealand Woman's Suffrage Movement) and references to New Zealand being the first country to allow women to vote, the ERC campaign also drew upon New Zealanders' pride in providing a voice for women and minority groups. The provision of multilingual pamphlets and the promotion of the changes to the Maori electoral option (and Maori seats) that would be implemented with MMP further supported the view of MMP as the electoral system that provided a voice for minority interests.

Framing MMP as a system that produces more 'fair' results, representing the voice of the voter by providing each party with a proportional share of votes in Parliament,

was likely a deliberate choice to capture the 'wider discontent' of voters (Stevenson, 2002) regarding some of the more frustrating outcomes of a FPP system, such as the 1978 and 1981 general election results. As a further example, in 1981 the Social Credit party, considered by many to be a 'fringe' party (Vowles, 1995, p. 5), won nearly 21 percent of the popular vote, but only gained two electorate seats in Parliament (New Zealand Electoral Commission, n.d.). This was one of the examples of the difficulty of voting out an MP from a major party, and/or securing representation for smaller parties, as the FPP system reinforced a 'two-party system'. Furthermore, those who lived in a strongly-held Labour or National electorate, but wished to vote for a minority party, may feel like their votes were 'wasted' as their support did not translate into a share of seats in Parliament (Kuhn & Neveu, 2002).

Together, the ERC campaign's choice of frames and the images used in the advertising, portrayed the choice of electoral systems as one of 'David and Goliath'; a decision between a system that supported everyday New Zealanders and middle-class New Zealand values or one that supported the interests of big money, and the political elite. It built on the social values of egalitarianism (Liu, Wilson, McClure, & Higgins, 1999; Trevor-Roberts, Ashkanasy, & Kennedy, 2003), and New Zealanders' 'Tall Poppy Syndrome' (Mouly & Sankaran, 2000)[37] to suggest that a vote for MMP was a vote for these egalitarian values.

6.3.3   Campaign for Better Government advertising – themes and frames

The majority of the CBG campaign's advertising focused on the themes of Negative Consequences, Hidden Power, Accountability, the Cost of Systems, Representation, Effective Government, and Simplicity/Complexity

In highlighting these themes as the key issues at stake in the referendum campaign, the CBG campaign drew on imagery of 'faceless politicians' and politicians dressed in suits to evoke ideas of 'fat cat' politicians that needed to be held accountable. This imagery focused on negative opinions of the MMP system. By portraying the MMP system as a system that encourages self-interested and power-hungry politicians, the CBG set up a contrast that promoted the FPP system as a more accountable system that limited politicians excesses.

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[37] 'Tall Poppy Syndrome' refers to the derision or distrust of 'tall poppies' (those who are conspicuously successful, or whose rank or wealth attract envy or hostility) (Ramson, 1988, as cited in Mouly & Sankaran, 2000). Mouly and Sankaran (2000) suggest that the usage is unique to Australasia, while the term has its origins in in Greek literature (Peeters, 2003).

The CBG campaign also drew on imagery and text that evoked concern about the 'unknown' realities of MMP, and that a poor choice now could damage the economy, or young New Zealanders' futures. Many of the images used to portray Negative Consequences were deliberatly emotive, and appeared to deliberatly evoked fear and concern about the country's future under MMP. For example, the use of black and white images of men screaming in straitjackets, and crying babies with text about protecting the future of New Zealand children[38].

The CBG campaign's use of frames also drew on the social myths of 'political correctness', self-interested politicians, and bureaucracy and red tape.

The focus on the possibility that minority interests could be 'overrepresented' due to a minority party holding the balance of power in a coalition government drew on a common conflict between liberal values and conservative values. While the representation of minority issue ensures that the views of those who do not have the privilege of a majority voice are considered, there is also the argument that the views of the minority take priority over those of the majority. This argument also evokes issues surrounding race relations in New Zealand, where settlers of European descent constituting the majority, and indigenous Maori constituting the minority (as well as well-defined Asian and Pacific minority groups).

The introduction of the party list system, and the claim that list MPs could be nominated and enter Parliament due to their reputation within the party rather than their service as an electorate MP, evokes the social myths of self-interested politicians, and a distrust of political parties. This frame on the Hidden Power theme suggests that a vote for MMP is a vote for a system where politicians enter Parliament due to their ability to 'play the system' rather than through their representation of constituents' interests.

The way that the issue of 'Effective Government' is framed in CBG advertising, with the promotion of FPP as a system that enables government to effectively enact policy (and by comparison, MMP as a system where it is difficult to pass legislation due to the number of competing parties in Parliament), the CBG advertising draws on the social myths of stifling bureaucracy and red tape, emphasising the potential for coalition governments (with minority parties often holding the 'balance of power')

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[38] Returned advertising materials available in the Alexander Turnbull Library suggest that this advertising evoked a strong response, with a large volume of circulars having been returned with comments about scaremongering.

under MMP, in contrast to the strong, decisive majority governments that tend to be created under the FPP system.

In comparison to the ERC campaign, the CBG campaign's advertising also appeared more professional, with staged photographs and its "Tick the top box – Reject MMP" series showing a consistent, professional design. The CBG campaign received funding from a number of businesses (MacDonald, 1993, as cited in Stevenson, 2002), and used prominent advertising company Saatchi & Saatchi to create its advertising material. This difference in campaign material may have inadvertently emphasised the parallels drawn between the CBG campaign and big business interests, positioning MMP as 'the underdog', or the everyday New Zealander locked in a battle against big business.

Conversely, the professional presentation of this campaign material may have reinforced CBG's message that the FPP system provides for more effective government and stability, by highlighting the ability to create a professional, focused campaign and attract the resources to fund it.

6.3.4   The official information campaign

In comparison to the partisan campaigns the official referendum information campaign focused on a comparison of the number of MPs, proportionality, Maori representation, the propensity for coalitions under each system, representation of minorities and geographic regions.

The material provided by the Electoral Referendum Panel explained the possible differences in a neutral tone, and elaboration on each feature of the voting systems strictly focused on possible outcomes, and what outcomes are more frequent under each system. For example, when discussing minority representation and minority parties, the information notes that for FPP "since support for minor parties is usually spread thinly across electorates rather than being concentrated in only one or a small number of electorates it is difficult for minor parties to win sufficient votes in any electorate to beat all the other candidates" (New Zealand Electoral Referendum Panel, 1993, p. 8). For MMP, the information notes the "5 per cent 'threshold' means that only the larger minor parties are likely to have seats in Parliament. Very small minor parties are not likely to clear this hurdle – they will not usually win any electorate seats and their share of the nationwide party vote will not be sufficient for them to obtain any party list seats" (New Zealand Electoral Referendum Panel, 1993, p. 8).

At one point the Electoral Referendum Panel information does appear to apply a biased frame on the information provided. This occurs to the pamphlet "The Referendum. The Guide – Referendum '93: What's it going to be?", in which the Panel proposes criteria for judging voting systems. In this, it notes the criterion of "fairness", described as whether political parties win a share of the seats that is similar to their share of the votes, or whether there is a marked difference between the votes a party receives and the number of seats in Parliament (New Zealand Electoral Referendum Panel, 1993). It could be argued that by calling this criterion "fairness" rather than proportionality, the Electoral Referendum framed proportionality in a manner that biased readers towards the more proportional MMP system. The criterion "fairness" was not present in official information for the 2011 referendum (McNair, 2000).

While the propensity for coalitions under each system was mentioned in advertising material, it was framed in a markedly different way in the advertising. The official information campaign discussed coalitions through the frame of the likelihood of each system leading to a coalition government. In comparison, the advertising information focused on what coalition governments meant for effective governance – whether they created stability or instability, the level of control coalition partners have over government policy and the passage of legislation, and whether voters could distinguish the party from the coalition (in order to hold elected officials to account).

Representation of minority issues was raised through the discussion of how the introduction of the party vote improved representation of minority parties. The information stated that the ability to vote for a minority party, and have this vote counted as a party vote, would enable minority parties that do not have enough support in any one electorate to win an electorate seat (but with significant national support) to enter Parliament through the party vote.

In contrast, while the ERC advertising does mention that the party vote would enable more proportional representation of minority parties, the most frequent representation frame in ERC advertising was that MMP supported minority representation because of the party list system. The advertising claimed that party lists in overseas jurisdictions with proportional representation typically feature more minority representatives. These advertisements referred to the number of women in German Parliament under MMP, and the number of women in Parliament in countries which have proportional representation. For example, the

ERC produced a pamphlet entitled *'MMP – A way your vote as a woman could make a difference'*, which claimed that "in most of the countries that use a list, the parties are widely criticised by the media and public if they have not given high [list] places to women."

Representation in the CBG advertisements was overwhelmingly focused on geographic representation. Representation of minority interests featured in only two samples of the CBG advertisements. One related to the length of time it has taken under FPP to make decisions on fisheries claims under the Treaty of Waitangi. This then linked minority representation to Effective Government, implying that decisions on minority interests would take even longer under coalition governments that MMP would produce. The other focused on the representation of women in Parliament. In this, CBG claimed that the figures in ERC's advertising regarding the representation of women in government under MMP or proportional representation systems were "misleading". This advertisement framed minority representation as an issue that had "nothing whatsoever to do with the electoral system". It stated that "[gender] parity can be achieved under any system if the parties themselves adopt gender balance quota systems". The advertisement stated that these quota systems were already in place in the regions used as positive examples in ERC advertising.

6.4   2011 Electoral Referendum campaign

6.4.1   *Summary of results*

The 2011 CFM advertising focused on the themes of Proportionality, Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists, and Representation.

Much like in the 1993 MMP advertising, the Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists theme focused again on imagery and text that suggested that the MMP system is more representative of middle-class New Zealand values (often linking this with the theme of proportionality), and that it was a system that belonged to all New Zealanders. While in the 1993 MMP advertising the theme of Representation was raised in terms of both minority representation and geographic representation, the 2011 advertising only featured this theme in terms of minority representation.

Given proportionality is one of the key aspects of the MMP system, it is not unexpected to see Proportionality was also strongly featured in the CFM advertising. What was unexpected, however, was that proportionality did not feature in the VFC campaign at all. While FPP is not a proportional representation system, two of the other systems under consideration do provide some level of proportionality. For

example, Single Transferable Vote can be used to achieve proportional representation (though it can also be used in other ways, depending on whether or not it is structured with a party list vote or as a parliament made up of electorate MPs (New Zealand Electoral Commission, 2011e), and the Supplementary Member system enables a level of proportionality through the election of list MPs (New Zealand Electoral Commission, 2011d).

Instead, the VFC advertising focused on the themes of Hidden Power and Change.

The Change theme used by VFC was presented as a positive outcome in and of itself, and advertising featured this theme was often paired with text or imagery about the perceived negative consequences of the MMP system (for example, coalition negotiations). This theme was not present in the CFM advertising. While a vote to retain the existing electoral system would not provide a 'change', this suggests that the CFM did not present a counter-argument to this frame.

In a similar vein, Hidden Power was a theme that was only present in the *VFC* campaign. Advertising which featured the theme of hidden power was typically paired with imagery or text that linked the MMP system to an uneven balance of power, or created powerbrokers. Several of the advertisements used the image of Winston Peters, the NZ First Party leader who has taken the role of power broker with NZ First willing to form a coalition wither either of the two main parties. Other VFC advertising featured former ACT Party leader Rodney Hide, with the text "two-faced?", referencing Rodney Hide using MP travel subsidies to take his partner on overseas holidays while cultivating a 'perk-busting' image and publicly speaking out against travel subsidies (Gower, 2009; List, 2004). Despite being a small party, Hide was able to hold a ministerial position as MMP enabled the ACT Party provide support for the National-led Government on matters of confidence and supply. This theme was used with imagery or text which suggested that majoritarian electoral systems were better, as they delivered more predictable outcomes, or the suggested that list system in MMP creates MPs who "serve political party bosses" and lack accountability.

It is interesting that VFC focused on the negative side of the list system, given that the Supplementary Member system – which was later cited as the campaign's preferred alternative – also features a list system (albeit somewhat modified in comparison with that used under MMP). There were other alternative systems listed in the referendum options which do not use a list system, and the lack of a list system was noted as a feature of these systems.

Four of the themes present in 2011 advertising were observed in both campaigns. However, the campaigns presented different frames on these issues. Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists was a common theme used in CFM advertising. The campaign drew on egalitarian appeals to present MMP as a system for the (everyday) people. It characterised MMP as a system that gives power to "people like you" whereas the FPP system gave power "to a handful of politicians" (the Elite). In contrast, the VFC campaign only featured the Everyday New Zealanders/elitists theme once, through an image of the Prime Minister and the text "John Key is voting to get rid of MMP. Will You?". This is an unusual appeal as it presents a positive message to two very different sets of viewers – the elite and the 'everyday New Zealander'. On the one hand it portrays a vote for a change in electoral systems as something that the Prime Minister, a leader and businessman, and therefore a member of 'the elite', supports. Those who aspire to be a member of 'the elite' may seek to emulate this behaviour and could associate a vote for a new system as an action that places them with the 'elite'. On the other hand, John Key has cultivated an image during his tenure as a 'man of the people', who is just your 'everyday New Zealander' (3 News, 2009; Brown, 2011). To a different audience, this message could associate John Key and his 'everyday New Zealander' persona with a vote for a change of system. Those who want to associate with New Zealand's egalitarian values and be an 'everyday New Zealander' could then associate a vote for a new system as the action of an 'everyday New Zealander'.

Representation featured twice in *VFC* advertising, in the context of the benefits of having a majority of MPs elected as electorate MPs. This was portrayed as positive as it made MPs more accountable (i.e. they can't return to Parliament as a List Member). One pamphlet also promoted Supplementary Member as a system which would enable 'small parties' to enter Parliament and represent minority interests, but would reduce the likelihood of these minority interests holding the balance of power in the formation of a government.

In contrast, the *CFM* focused on representation of minorities or single issues. Radio ads focused on concepts such as "giving us all a stronger voice", an allusion to the ability for minority interests to be represented (as well as other concepts such as proportionality). One pamphlet raised the concern about going back to a system (FPP) "…that wastes our votes and treats us differently", whereas MMP could provide the "best of both worlds" for representation, allowing voters to vote for both geographic (electorate) and party representation.

Widespread Support featured in two samples of *VFC* advertising, and one sample of *CFM* advertising. In *VFC* advertising this was demonstrated by text that suggested many people didn't like MMP, or many people were voting for a new system. In the *CFM* advertisement this was portrayed by talking of FPP as a system "we have already rejected", reminding voters that the shift to MMP was a decision made by the majority.

Simplicity/Complexity only featured once in each campaign's advertising. The CFM used this theme to frame MMP as a system that is "clear", referencing the clarity of proportionality - parties get the proportion of seats that relate to the proportion of votes cast for them. VFC referred to Simplicity/Complexity as a negative feature of the Single Transferrable Vote, characterising it as "very complicated".

6.4.2 Dominant themes in Campaign for MMP advertising

CFM advertising focused on the themes of Proportionality, Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists, and Representation.

To a lesser extent advertising also featured the themes of Outdated/Modern, Effective Government, Effective Parliament, Widespread Support, and Simplicity/Complexity.

Proportionality was the most significant theme, appearing in 12 of the 15 advertising samples from the campaign. The CFM campaign stated that 'fairness' was used as a proxy for proportionality in its 2011 advertising campaign, and this was borne out in the themes observed. Fairness was typically discussed in the context of proportionality, and how proportional representation systems ensure votes 'count', and voters' wishes are directly translated to electoral seats[39]. For example, two samples of advertising characterised this as parties getting their "fair share". In one sample MMP was contrasted with the FPP and Supplementary Member systems, where a party can have fewer votes than another party and still be able to form a government. The majority of CFM's that spoke of alternative systems, however, focused on the difference between MMP and FPP.

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[39] While MMP is a proportional representation system, it should be noted that it is not purely proportional. Political parties must gain over five percent of the total party vote ('the five percent threshold), or one electorate seat, in order to gain a seat in the House of Representatives. The five percent threshold is under review as part of the Review of MMP established after the 2011 referendum (New Zealand Electoral Commission, 2012, 2013b).

The CFM portrayed the theme of Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists by using inclusive language, referring to the MMP system as a system that's "ours", and that keeps "the power of your votes". It characterised MMP as a system that gives power to "people like you" whereas the FPP system gave power "to a handful of politicians" (the Elite).

Proportionality, Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists and Representation were the three key features used to characterise MMP as a system that supported the values of egalitarianism, ensuring "fair play", with everyone having a chance to get a representative that would stand up for their views. The MMP system was portrayed as a system that belonged to the people, the everyday New Zealander. Other options such as FPP were characterised as supporting the values of politicians or the elite, and taking power away from the people.

The majority of the CFM advertising was text-based rather than using particular images. Most advertising used general imagery associated with voting such as ballot boxes and tick symbols. Only one image of a person was used – that of Anton Oliver, former All Black. As with John Key, the use of Anton Oliver's image and his work as a spokesperson for the campaign could appeal to both the elite or those who aspire to be elite (a top sportsperson, and a representative of one of New Zealand's biggest professional sports), and to the everyday New Zealander, as the All Blacks are a strong part of the New Zealand identity (Scherer, Falcous, & Jackson, 2008; Scherer & Jackson, 2007), and sport and the aspiration to be like our top sportspeople is a strong part of the New Zealand psyche.

Advertising appeared consistent, modern, and professional, bolstering the image of the MMP system as a modern system with a proven track record. This was further supported by the use of the Outdated/Modern theme, which spoke of a vote against MMP as "going backwards". This usually also implied that a vote against MMP was a vote for the previous system, FPP. While this may reflect that FPP is the one other voting system that voters are familiar with on a national level, it is interesting to note that when speaking of the other options, CFM characterised the decision as one between MMP and FPP, not MMP or four other options presented. The CFM advertising did not delve into many of the policy aspects of the choice between electoral systems, restricting its advertising primarily to the benefits of the existing MMP system.

Despite a focus on the themes of Proportionality and Representation, other structural themes such as Effective Government, Effective Parliament,

Accountability, and Simplicity/Complexity were given brief, or little, attention. Value-based themes such as Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists and Outdated/Modern were more common, supporting the portrayal of MMP as a system that represented the people.

While there was little imagery to support the frames provided, through text and the choice of celebrity spokesperson the CFM framed the referendum decision as one between a proven system that is owned by the people of New Zealand, and an outdated systems that doesn't reflect voters' interests and was voted out 20 years ago.

6.4.3 Dominant themes in Vote for Change advertising campaign

In comparison to the CFM, the VFC advertising was of variable quality, with a combination of advertising produced through public submissions and more professional advertising with staged photographs and its "Tick the top box – Reject MMP" series showing a consistent, professional design.

The majority of the VFC campaign advertising focused on the themes of Hidden Power and Change. Accountability, Widespread Support, and Representation also featured in more than one sample, but were not frequent.

Change is a unique theme, as it appeals to the audience to vote for the system that offers change, without any elaboration on why change is preferable. It is a simple theme which easily encapsulates a message of "anything but MMP" for a referendum which has multiple options. It could be viewed as simply a result-based appeal, encouraging those who see change as a positive outcome to vote for a new system. However, it is a rather hollow outcome to promote, as 'change' is an enduring option of any vote.

In comparison to other result themes, the Change theme refers to the immediate result of shifting to a new electoral system ('change'), but not a long-term result. As noted in Chapter 4, 'change' may be a positive result, but more recent political campaigns which have also appealed to the public to vote for change typically follow this statement with an example of what 'change' will result in. For example, President Obama's 2008 electoral campaign spoke to voters of "Change you can believe in" (Grunwald, 2009; Nakamura, 2011), and the New Zealand National Party's 2008 electoral campaign also urged voters "It's time to change. Party Vote National and Choose a Bright Future" (Laughey, 2007). Both of these statements

more clearly associated change with concepts such as a change to a trustworthy President, or change that will bear positive results.

Use of this theme can also be impacted by the perception that a vote in a referendum can be viewed as a vote of confidence in the current government. Setälä argues that referendums may "turn out to be votes on the popularity of the political leaders who are promoting the proposals to be voted upon" (Setälä, 1999, p. 69). Hug and Sciarini (2000, as cited in Tridmas, 2009, p. 132), propose that a Government-supported optional referendum may be treated by the Government's supporters "as a kind of confidence vote" and they will therefore tend to support its recommendation. This suggests that with the National Party polling at 49.5-54.0 percent in the week prior to the referendum (Roy Morgan Research, 2011a; Watkins, 2011) and National Party leader John Key polling at over 50 percent for preferred Prime Minister (One News, 2011; Watkins, 2011), using the message of change as a positive outcome may have hindered VFC's campaign.

The frames used on the Hidden Power theme also drew strongly on social myths of the 'fat cat' politician who is self-interested and power-hungry (Flinders, 2012; Lewis, 2002). By using images of Winston Peters and Rodney Hide, small party leaders who have been power brokers in coalition-negotiations, the campaign sought to capitalise on discontent and frustration with the processed of MMP. The text that accompanied these images – "Trust Winston to choose the next PM?" "Your Choice, Not His" – reminded voters of the sometimes unpredictable nature of coalition negotiations under MMP, portraying it as a system captured by minority interests.

6.4.4   Official information campaign information

The material provided in the official referendum information campaign run by the Electoral Commission in 2011 explained the referendum options and possible outcomes in a neutral tone, using a consistent series of videos, fact-sheets, pamphlets, and website material to inform voters of their options. The Electoral Commission ran a dedicated referendum website, which was later used to inform voters about the progress of the MMP review.

In comparison to the partisan campaigns the official referendum information campaign focused on the themes of Accountability, Effective Government, Effective Parliament, Proportionality, and Representation (treating minority representation and geographic representation as two separate themes).

The Electoral Commission stated that these themes were chosen as a distillation of the ten criteria for judging voting systems identified in the *Report of the Royal Commission on the Electoral System 1986*[40]. The Electoral Commission also noted these themes are consistent with handbooks produced by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (Arseneau & Roberts, 2012; New Zealand Electoral Commission, 2011a, p. 328).

These five themes were used as foundation for materials explaining the five electoral systems under consideration. The materials explained the possible differences in a neutral tone, and elaboration on each feature of the voting systems strictly focused on possible outcomes, and what outcomes are more frequent under each system (such as the potential for coalition governments). For example, when discussing proportionality, the information sheet for Supplementary Member notes that "larger parties would likely be overrepresented in Parliament and small parties under-represented (because 75 percent of the seats in parliament are electorate seats, determined by a FPP method).

The fact sheets produced by the Electoral Commission also featured specific references to the number of MPs in Parliament under each system, and a list of jurisdictions that used each electoral system.

While providing a rather dense level of information, the factsheets on the Electoral Commission website provided robust information on the operation of each system and their potential outcomes. Several times in the information, it was noted that many criteria for judging an electoral system were mutually exclusive, or involve a trade-off – i.e. more effective government usually means a trade-off in another area, such as representation.

The Electoral Commission public information campaign made use of new media tools, with an interactive assessment tool that voters could use to assess the electoral system options, and an active presence on social networking site Facebook. The interactive assessment tool allowed a user to indicate which of the five criteria (Accountability, Proportionality, Effective Government, Effective Parliament, and Representation) they valued more or less. By using a sliding scale to indicate which

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[40] The ten criteria identified by the Royal Commission in 1986 were: 1) Fairness between political parties, 2) Effective representation of minority and special interest groups, 3) Effective Māori representation, 4) Political integration, 5) Effective representation of constituents, 6) Effective voter participation, 7) Effective Government, 8) Effective Parliament, 9) Effective parties, and 10) Legitimacy (Royal Commission on the Electoral System, 1986).

criterion they valued more or less, the tool showed which electoral systems were more or less consistent with their values.

Through Facebook, the Electoral Commission also posted information and reminders about the referendum. Users could discuss the elections or referendum with other users on the Commission's Facebook page.

6.5 Comparing the two referenda campaigns

The previous sections of this chapter have summarised the major findings regarding what kind of information was presented to voters in the major advertising campaigns of the 1993 and 2011 electoral referenda. This section examines the findings from the two case studies, and addresses the third and fourth of the questions guiding this research: (3) - what themes were used by more than one referendum campaign?, and (4) - how did each campaign position itself in relation to the other(s)?.

6.5.1   Key changes in landscape

The political landscape under MMP has changed significantly between 1993 and 2011. The current Parliament includes members from eight different political parties (New Zealand Electoral Commission, 2012). While the first MMP election provided a shaky start to the new system, with a nation left in limbo while coalition negotiations stretched on for nine weeks (Aimer & Miller, 2002a), the public has now seen the formation of six MMP Governments, covering a wide variety of governance arrangements (Boston, 2009). New Zealand political parties have adjusted to the realities of MMP. Following the uncertainty of the 1996 coalition process, parties began indicating their partnership or coalition preferences prior to the election (Boston, 2011). The processes used to decide the party list are typically published by parties (Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2010; NZ Labour Party, 2007), and some parties (for example, the Green Party) specifically focus on the party list as a way to introduce diversity to the party and to Parliament (Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2010).

The most obvious change since the 1993 referendum is the incumbent system. When MMP was introduced in 1993, it overturned almost 73 years of government under the FPP system. In 2011, not only had MMP been the electoral system for 18 years, but there were voters who had never voted under the FPP system. According to the Electoral Commission's data on registered voters in New Zealand (New Zealand Electoral Commission, 2013a), over a quarter of all registered voters were too young

to vote when the FPP system was in place, and have grown up with MMP as the only electoral system in place[41].

One of the largest changes in the advertising environment between 1993 and 2011 was the use of the Internet. While dial-up Internet access was available to academic institutions in New Zealand from as early as 1989 (McNabb, 2009; Smith et al., 2008), it wasn't until the mid-1990s that New Zealand saw the commercialisation of the Internet (Karel, 2003), with a large number of residential users beginning to purchase connections. As at 2008, New Zealand had among the highest proportion of Internet users in the world. Almost eighty percent of New Zealand citizens now have access to the Internet, with a third of all users spending at least ten hours a week on the Internet and half spend more than five hours a week online (Smith et al., 2008).

With the increase in access to the Internet by the general public, online advertising began to appear in 1994 (Manheim et al., 2001), well after the referendum. While there was no digital advertising produced for the 1993 referendum, by 2011 the Internet had become so ubiquitous that it is difficult to imagine an advertising campaign that would not use the Internet. This change in advertising mediums presents both a challenge in comparing the 1993 and 2011 campaigns, and an interesting case study of the changing way in which citizens seek information and advertisers present information.

6.5.2   Changes in the campaigns: comparing and contrasting 1993 and 2011

In 1993, the amateur look of the ERC advertising material gave impression of a grassroots movement. The variety of material, as well as the volume, supported a public image of a group being formed by concerned citizens looking to effect change. Pamphlets were text-heavy, seeking to persuade readers that the MMP system provided better outcomes that FPP. But in 2011, the VFC campaign's crowdsourced advertising gave a different impression. The campaign ran a competition which asked members of the public to submit suggested advertising images, with a $10,000 prize for the winners (Vote for Change, 2011a). However, the low volume of advertising from the campaign, paired with cynical statements about the current system, was at odds with the professional campaign logo and organisational system in place. In contrast to the ERC's 1993 advertising, VFC advertising used simple statements. While this quickly conveyed a message, it also avoided the impression

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[41] Based on the number of registered voters who are under 35 years old, and would therefore have been 17 or younger in 1993.

that the campaign sought to educate. Those pamphlets that were produced by VFC outside of the competition had much more information, looked professional, and sought to provide information on why a change would be a positive outcome.

The 2011 CFM advertising material was professional and consistent, which promoted the image of a well-organised and funded campaign. Imagery was consistent across several samples. The 1993 CBG advertising also showed consistent imagery across many samples, and appeared professionally run. CBG advertising received far more attention for being designed by an advertising company, and crafted to persuade. This is due to several factors – the CBG used a consistent set of negative messages regarding the consequences of MMP, which were emotive and attracted attention. Also, the campaign was run by Saatchi and Saatchi, New Zealand's largest advertising company. This compounded the impression that the CBG was funded by, run by, and represented the interests of wealthy New Zealand businesspeople. The volume of different advertising produced also implied that there was significant funding being provided to the CBG (which, it could be assumed, required wealthy supporters).

Despite the change in organisers between the 1993 and 2011, the *CBG* and *VFC* were both viewed as supporting the values and objectives of the elite. On the other hand, while the pro-MMP campaigns made the transition from grassroots to the establishment from 1993 to 2011, the professionalisation of the MMP campaign in 2011 did not appear to affect their image as an organisation that supports the average New Zealander.

The MMP "Everyday New Zealanders" and proportionality themes endured, but the VFC campaign focused more on the negative outcomes of MMP and the ephemeral theme of 'change' than what an alternative system can offer. While this is in some ways similar to how the CBG campaign ran, it appeared even more focused on othering.

As noted previously, the advent of online advertising was a significant change between the 1993 and 2011 campaigns. However, what is perhaps more remarkable is that despite the advent of online advertising, the majority of the advertising from both lobby groups was through traditional media channels. In the sample collected, the CFM only had one Internet advertisement, which was published on stuff.co.nz, the New Zealand Herald website, Facebook, and The Standard blog. The VFC campaign used several of its images from the advertising competition, and placed

online advertisements on Facebook, and through *ffunnell*, an advertising network which services independent blog sites (ffunnell, 2001; Vote for Change, 2011b).

6.5.3 Themes – continuity or change?

In both the 1993 and 2011 campaigns, the campaigns in support of MMP both focused strongly on the themes of Proportionality and Everyday New Zealanders. The campaigns in support of alternatives to MMP (i.e., the FPP campaign of 1993 and the VFC campaign of 2011) both focused strongly on the themes of Hidden Power and Accountability.

Both of the campaigns for a change from the incumbent electoral system (ERC in 1993, and VFC in 2011) featured the themes of Change and Outdated/Modern, which were not present in the campaigns for incumbent systems.

In addition, there were several campaign-specific themes observed across the two referenda (where a theme was present on one side of the campaign, but there was no mention of the theme by the opposition). For instance, the pro-MMP ERC and CFM both featured the themes of Proportionality[42] and Outdated/Modern, while the opposing campaigns did not use these themes at all.

The FPP/Change campaigns from the CBG and VFC campaigns both featured the themes of Hidden Power in their 1993 and 2011 advertising, however this theme was also used by the ERC in its 1993 advertising. The themes of Change and Widespread Support were both used solely or predominantly by the "challenger" lobby group – the ERC in 1993, and VFC in 2011.

6.5.4 Frames – continuity or change?

The imagery and myths evoked through these two campaigns framed the referendum as a vote for a system for modern times (and all New Zealanders) or a vote against a system that creates unpredictable outcomes and powerbrokers.

Some themes were consistently used by those campaigning for a particular system – Proportionality was specific to the pro-MMP campaigns, due to the MMP system being a strongly proportional representation system. Outdated/Modern was also only used by the pro-MMP campaigns, however in 1993 this theme was used to frame the FPP as "outdated", whereas the 2011 advertising more frequently used the

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[42] The official information campaign also dropped the use of the term 'fairness' in the 2011 campaign, choosing instead to use the term "Proportionality".

frame of a "modern system for modern times", focusing on the success of the MMP system rather than the perceived failings of the FPP system.

In 1993, the challenger (ERC) was the only side to use the 'Campaign Tactics' frame, where a campaign specifically mentions the tactics of a campaign supporting a system, including commentary on the funders or organisers of a campaign, and/or how the campaign is being run. This is particularly interesting as the ERC's advertising appeared to be successful in characterising the CBG as a campaign funded and directed by big business, and therefore supporting a system that represents the interests of the elite. There was no counter-message from the CBG criticising the funders of the pro-MMP campaign, or commenting on those supporting the campaign. The ERC was able to create a negative frame about the opposing campaign while promoting the MMP system as one that isn't captured by self-interested, calculating politicians.

The Campaign Tactics frame was not observed in 2011 advertising samples. There was no criticism of the opposing lobby group from either campaign, and criticism of the opposing electoral system(s) was less personalised. Whether this is reflective of a shift in leadership from within the lobby groups, or was a symptom of a lack of strong interest in the 2011 referendum is unclear.

There were no clear themes that were consistently used by the incumbent lobby group. A number of frames appear to follow the system, rather than the incumbent or challenger system.

The campaigns promoting the MMP system continually focused on the diversity and representation of minority interests (and improved representation for women) that MMP could foster. The frame of "Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists" endured through the campaigns. This frame was strongly tied to Proportionality. In the 1993 advertising campaign, Proportionality was often talked about in terms of providing a "fair" outcome, with "fairness" explicitly linked to this concept. In the 2011 campaign, fairness was not explicitly mentioned, but rather proportionality was used as a proxy for fairness (Grey & Fitzsimons, 2012). This was demonstrated through language that talked about proportionality in the context of allocating parties their "fair share" of votes.

The campaigns that stood against the MMP system both focused on the Hidden Power and Negative Consequences themes. The frames of the 'fat cat politicians' and backroom dealers were used consistently from 1993 to 2011. In 2011, however, this

became more specific, with references to particular politicians deemed to be power brokers.

While the 1993 advertising paired the Hidden Power frame with strong imagery about negative consequences, and emotive advertising which evoked fear and concern, the 2011 advertising lacked this strong emotive appeal. Rather, 2011 advertising seemed more comedic and seemed to evoke a sense of absurdity at the outcomes possible with MMP.

6.6 Summary

This chapter presented a summary of the two case studies of the 1993 and 2011 electoral referendum advertising. It identified common themes between the campaigns and concluded that the imagery and myths evoked through the referenda framed both decisions as a vote for a system for all New Zealanders or a vote against a system that does not hold politicians accountable and/or creates powerbrokers. A comparison between the two case studies also suggests that frames follow the specific electoral system rather than being used by a campaign for an incumbent or challenger system.

The following chapter summarises the final conclusions of this thesis.

7   Final Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis was to compare and contrast the frames in advertising in the 1993 and 2011 New Zealand electoral referenda. This chapter draws together the findings from the four research questions to establish final conclusions on how advertising, as part of the broader media landscape, framed the discussion of issues in the 1993 and 2011 New Zealand electoral referenda.

7.1   Summary of the study

By assessing the information provided in the advertising of partisan lobby groups this thesis explored how advertising was used to frame the discussion the impacts of a change in electoral system.

This thesis examined what kind of information was available to voters about the impacts of a change in electoral system. By considering the frames presented in advertising in the 1993 and 2011 New Zealand electoral referendum campaigns of the major lobby groups, an analysis of what aspects of the systems the information emphasised was undertaken. In assessing the two campaigns, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What were the main themes the electoral referenda advertising focused on?

2. What aspects of the issues were given prominence in each referendum campaign?

3. What themes were used by more than one referendum campaigns?

4. How did each campaign position itself in relation to the other(s)?

The data collection and analysis methodology was a blend of both qualitative methods (content analysis) and quantitative research methods (framing theory and media semiotics was discussed).

All available advertising material (print, video, audio, and digital material) from the advertising campaigns of the two main referenda lobby groups in each referendum was collected. For 1993, advertising material from ERC (pro-MMP) and the CBG (pro-FPP) was selected. For 2011, advertising material from CFM (pro-MMP) and VFC (pro-change/anti-MMP) was selected.

In order to ensure a similar breadth of material is selected for each campaign, all advertising produced in 1993 (up to 6 November 1993, the date of the 1993

referendum) and 2011 (up to 26 November 2011, the date of the 2011 referendum) that related to the referenda was included in this research.

The data included 70 pieces of advertising. 44 of these advertisements were from the 1993 referendum - 25 from the ERC (MMP) campaign, and 19 for the CBG (FPP) campaign. 26 of the advertisements were from the 2011 referendum – 16 from the CFM (MMP) and 10 from VFC (anti-MMP).

A hybrid methodology combining Ritchie and Lewis' (2003) thematic analysis approach and McNabb's nine step analysis process (McNabb, 2009) was used to assess and categorise the data. This included:

1. Sorting and resorting material to establish patterns and structure, using an inductive coding approach to establish a set of recurring themes, concepts, and/or signs within the material.

2. Clustering material based on identified themes.

3. Comparative analysis of themes to identify similarities and contrasts.

4. Re-coding of material to ensure consistency.

5. Analysing the data by theme and campaign to produce a qualitative assessment of the advertising, drawing on semiotics and framing theory.

7.2 Summary of results

Results from the content analysis of the 1993 case study identified that the pro-MMP ERC advertising covered a broad range of themes, but the majority of its advertising addressing focused primarily on the themes of Proportionality, Representation, Widespread Support, and Accountability. In contrast, the pro-FPP CBG used fewer themes overall, but focused on a broad range of themes within its advertising samples, including Negative Consequences, Hidden Power, Accountability, the Cost of Systems, Representation, Effective Government, and Simplicity/Complexity.

Results from content analysis of the 2011 referendum advertising samples identified a strong difference between the two campaigns' themes. Both the overarching categories and specific themes used in the two campaigns were different, and several themes featured in one campaign, but not the other.

Hidden Power and Change constituted over half the themes identified in pro-change VFC advertising, while over half of the CFM's advertising focused on the two themes of Proportionality and Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists. Proportionality was only used in the pro-MMP CFM, and the Hidden Power and Change themes were only used by VFC.

7.2.1 1993 Electoral Referendum campaign

In 1993, the ERC's MMP advertising drew on the social myths of 'David and Goliath' and big business against the working class, as its frames for the campaign. By using imagery and text that associated the MMP system with the egalitarian values of the 'everyday New Zealander', and text that implied widespread support for the MMP system the ERC campaign created a 'brand' from what MMP stands for, and what kind of voter supports MMP.

Through characterising FPP supporters as 'big business', and the 'elite', the association of MMP with egalitarian values was then used to present MMP as the system that stands for the working class. MMP, they suggested, was for everybody. FPP was a system than benefitted wealthy businesspeople.

In contrast, the CBG campaign drew on imagery of 'faceless politicians' and politicians dressed in suits to evoke ideas of 'fat cat' politicians that needed to be held accountable. In comparison to the ERC campaign focusing on the positive outcomes of an MMP system, the CBG advertising focused on negative opinions of the MMP system. It characterised the MMP system as a system that encourages self-interested and power-hungry politicians, in comparison with an FPP system that was presented as a more accountable system that limited politicians excesses.

The CBG campaign used imagery and text that evoked concern about the 'unknown' realities of MMP, and that a poor choice now could damage the New Zealand's future. With strongly emotive advertising, the campaign's characterised FPP as a system that stood against myths of 'political correctness', self-interested politicians, and bureaucracy and red tape.

7.2.2 2011 Electoral Referendum campaign

In 2011, the CFM advertising drew on the same Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists theme as the 1993 ERC. Where the CFM chose to discuss alternative systems, it typically positioned the referendum decision as one between the FPP system and MMP, rather than all systems.

Using inclusive language, the campaign referred to the MMP system as a system that is "ours", keeps "the power of your votes" and gives power to "people like you". Once again, the campaign contrasted the choice of electoral systems as a system that supported the values of egalitarianism, and one that gave power "to a handful of politicians" (the Elite).

The VFC campaign's advertising focused on the positive value of Change, and Hidden Power.

Change advertising appealed to the audience to vote for the system that offers change, promoting a message of "anything but MMP". The frames used on the Hidden Power theme drew strongly on social myths used in 1993 *CBG* advertising, of the 'fat cat' politician who is self-interested and power-hungry. This advertising reminded viewers of the politicians who have been power brokers in coalition-negotiations under MMP, seeking to capitalise on discontent and frustration with the processed of MMP.

7.3   Final observations

The imagery and myths evoked through these two referenda framed the both decisions as a vote for a system for modern times (and all New Zealanders) or a vote against a system that creates unpredictable outcomes and powerbrokers. Specific frames typically followed the specific electoral system rather than being used by a campaign for an incumbent or challenger system.

The campaigns promoting the MMP system continually focused on the diversity and representation of minority interests (and improved representation for women) that MMP could foster. The frame of Everyday New Zealanders/Elitists endured through the campaigns. This frame was strongly tied to Proportionality. In the 1993 advertising campaign, Proportionality was often talked about in terms of providing a "fair" outcome, with "fairness" explicitly linked to this concept. In the 2011 campaign, fairness was not explicitly mentioned, but rather proportionality was used as a proxy for fairness (Grey & Fitzsimons, 2012). This was demonstrated through language that talked about proportionality in the context of allocating parties their "fair share" of votes.

The campaigns that stood against the MMP system both focused on the Hidden Power and Negative Consequences themes. The frames of the 'fat cat politicians' and backroom dealers were used consistently from 1993 to 2011. In 2011, however, this became more specific, with references to particular politicians deemed to be power

brokers. While the 1993 advertising paired the backroom dealers frame with strong imagery about negative consequences, and emotive advertising which evoked fear and concern, the 2011 advertising lacked this strong emotive appeal. Rather, 2011 advertising seemed more comedic and seemed to evoke a sense of absurdity at the outcomes possible with MMP.

7.4   Conclusion

The findings of this research expand knowledge of frames used in New Zealand electoral referenda advertising.

This research reveals that the New Zealand electoral referenda campaigns of 1993 and 2011 were pitched at ideological level, presenting New Zealand egalitarian values as consistent with an MMP system, and drawing on social myths of 'fat cat' power-hungry politicians and the need for more accountability to encourage support of the FPP and Supplementary Member (or VFC) campaigns.

By drawing on these social myths, the referenda advertising characterised the electoral system decisions as ideological and values-based choices, rather than linking the decision to existing party ideologies.

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