
CHAPTER 8

Suggestions and implications derived from theoretical synthesis

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Postmodernism has been described in Chapter 2 as a process as opposed to a phenomenon with a finite beginning and end. In this process form, postmodernism functions as a tool that enables one to deconstruct knowledge and reconstruct new knowledge from the original elements and potentially incorporate additional information (fragmentation and pastiche); it allows one to reconsider pre-existing definitions and distinctions between elements (de-differentiation); it acknowledges that interpretation is relative to the individual (relativism); and because of this, multiple interpretations may be accepted as plausible possibilities (pluralism and tolerance); and since this process reconsiders conventionally accepted knowledge, it is characterised as anti-foundational. Bearing this in mind, the author has used a reflective tone in discussions as a means of applying this process of postmodernism throughout the thesis to address issues concerning change and limitations of current knowledge in marketing and/or marketing communication principles within the context of a postmodern society. These points have been formulated in the form of questions or quasi-propositions and classed under an overall umbrella term of quasi-propositions.

The purpose of this chapter is to revisit the quasi-propositions by arranging them in summarised versions based in the order of the chapters in which they emerged. Table 8.1 indicates the key topics as they appeared in Chapters 2 to 5. The topics are unpacked with a representation of the quasi-propositions in summarised form, under the headings that described them in Chapters 2 to 5.

Table 8.1: Key topics within Chapters 2-5

Chapter 2: Postmodernism	Chapter 3: Marketing communication	Chapter 4: Information Communication Technology	Chapter 5: Generation Y
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology driving cultural transformation • Postmodernism characteristics • Transitioning from modern to postmodern marketing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing models • Service-dominant logic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology acceptance model • Interactivity • Complex systems • Mobile media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology effects • Raising Generation Y • Retail shopping • Marketing communication and Generation Y

8.2 POSTMODERNISM

The key topics for reflection within Chapter 2: Postmodernism were:

- Technology driving cultural transformation;
- Postmodernism characteristics; and
- Transitioning from modern to postmodern marketing.

8.2.1 Technology driving cultural transformation

Technology drives postmodern culture. Technology has been responsible for accelerating cultural developments, migrating culture from a modern to postmodern society.

8.2.2 Postmodernism characteristics

The literature has drawn attention to six specific characteristics of postmodernism: fragmentation, de-differentiation, hyperreality, chronology, pastiche and anti-foundationalism. Key aspects of these characteristics with respect to marketing and/or marketing communication have been highlighted. Furthermore, anticipated managerial implications have been suggested for each characteristic with respect to mobile and social media platforms and are documented in Chapter 9, specifically Table 9.3 and in Section 9.6.

Fragmentation

Consumer conundrums: The explosion of market offerings is a result of fragmentation. This abundance of offerings inundates consumers with greater choice and increases competition amongst marketers. In this environment of choice consumers are constantly forced to reconsider their product selections and their buying behaviour has become unpredictable.

Consumers are defined by their choices: micro-segmentation may be partly responsible for driving consumer confusion. Nonetheless micro-segmentation has allowed marketers to cater for a range of consumer needs (Firat & Dholakia, 2006:127). Whilst postmodern consumers might not know exactly what offering they want, they know what they do not want (Procter & Kitchen 2002:147). Rejection is as much a decision as acceptance.

Possible strategies to deal with the effects of fragmentation from a marketing and/or marketing communication perspective:

- Apply micro-marketing strategies: Implement customer profiling through sophisticated data management (Brown, 1995:108). Track purchase behaviour via loyalty programmes to generate personalised communication.
- Apply non-mass marketing communication means: Connect with consumers through alternative ways such as promotions, vouchers, samples and gifts with purchase, and buy one get one free propositions.
- Form an interest group relevant to the brand or target existing groups (physical or virtual communities): A benefit of targeting an existing group is that it is already a going concern with its own community. A risk associated with the development of a new group is the application of resources to ensure that the group remains a viable community. The skills required to attend to this task may not necessarily be within the scope of the organisation. Grönroos (2005:2-3) suggests targeting existing interest groups, with a view to building long-term relationships in a customer-centric approach to marketing. Grönroos (2005:2-3) devised the concept of *value-in-use*, which is the value customers obtain from using services or products, and only the customer can determine the value of goods or services. Thus *value-in-use* is

relative to the customer. This concept supports the customer-centric approach to marketing.

Fragmentation marketing communication opportunities: overcoming issues of micro-segmentation and communication clutter with digital media: Micro-segmentation and communication clutter are considered to be two main issues of fragmentation in the context of marketing and/or marketing communication, which plausibly can be addressed in marketing communication tactics using mobile and social media platforms (refer to Table 9.3 for details).

De-differentiation

Customer partnerships and collaboration: Product abundance has driven competition between brands, consequently increasing product quality and resulting in near parity performance. In this context where quality is almost always assured, consumers are more concerned about the product experience. This consumer behaviour has given rise to the concepts of partner-players and post-consumer (Firat & Dholakia, 2006:140), which are aligned with the concept of value-in-use (Grönroos, 2005:2-3).

De-differentiation marketing communication opportunities: blurred boundaries and value creation: Blurred boundaries and the creation of value are considered to be two areas of opportunity, conceptualised from de-differentiation, for suitable marketing communication tactics implemented through mobile and social media platforms (refer to Table 9.3 for details).

Hyperreality

Hyperreality marketing communication opportunities: virtual environments and authenticity: Virtual environments and authenticity are considered to be two areas of opportunity, conceptualised from hyperreality, for suitable marketing communication tactics implemented through mobile and social media platforms (refer to Table 9.3 for details).

Chronology

Altered perceptions of time and space: Mobile media and social media can be used anytime and anyplace; and allow real-time as well as delayed communications. These findings could conceivably impact on timing tactics used by marketers in their marketing communication.

Chronology marketing communication opportunities: real-time communication and rapid processing capabilities: Real-time communication and faster processing abilities of people are considered to be two areas of opportunity, conceptualised from chronology, for suitable marketing communication tactics implemented through mobile and social media platforms (refer to Table 9.3 for details).

Pastiche

Pastiche marketing communication opportunities: personalisation and shared creativity: Personalisation and sharing creativity are considered to be two areas of opportunity, conceptualised from pastiche, for suitable marketing communication tactics implemented through mobile and social media platforms (refer to Table 9.3 for details).

Anti-foundationalism

New media shifts conventional processes: Arguably the introduction of a new medium is anti-foundational, because it presents a new offering which breaks from familiar traditional media forms. The interactive properties of digital media have significant implications on the

way digital media is used by marketers and consumers. Digital media, for instance, has made it possible for consumers to generate their own content, publish it and share it, potentially with a global audience.

Anti-foundationalism marketing communication opportunities: unconventionality and customer networks: Unconventionality and customer networks are considered to be areas of opportunity, conceptualised from anti-foundationalism, for suitable marketing communication tactics implemented through mobile and social media platforms (refer to Table 9.3 for details).

8.2.3 Transitioning from modern to postmodern marketing

From closed to collaborative efforts: Firat and Dholakia (2006:147-151) have proposed the following transitions from modern to postmodern marketing:

- *From distinct business activity to embedded cultural practice* (2006:147).
- *From managed to collaborative marketing* (2006:150).
- *From centralised to diffused marketing* (2006:151).
- *From ordered to complex marketing* (2006:151).

8.3 MARKETING COMMUNICATION

The key topics for reflection within Chapter 3: Marketing communication were:

- Marketing models; and
- Service-dominant logic.

8.3.1 Marketing models

Are linear models still relevant?: Linear models fail to take into account that customer decision-making is seldom rational and linear. For instance, customers are in different states of awareness with respect to particular products, and customers are exposed to marketing communication efforts from competing brands, as well as other influences in the

market. These points raise doubts about the application of linear models in marketing communication.

New media: new communication models?: In terms of digital media, it is argued that new communication models should be developed which are more dynamic (considering the interactive properties of digital media) and are representative of conditions in contemporary society.

Multi-directional communication: In spite of noticeable deficiencies in formalised communication models in their application towards digital media, digital media has an array of tools which provide benefits to marketers. Interactive communication between marketers and customers is of particular importance. An advantage to customers is that interactive communication forms allow customers to specify their needs and for marketers to respond accordingly. A benefit from the marketer's perspective, beyond catering to their customers' needs, is the advantage of being able to listen to the market and apply the information learned from this process to improve offerings and better understand customers' needs and expectations.

Micro-marketing, a vicious or virtuous cycle: Digital media eases the process of micro-marketing and two-way exchanges of communication between marketers and consumers. In view of the increasing power of customers will there perhaps be another shift in marketing strategies that inverses customer and marketer roles; where marketing communication is influenced by marketers but controlled by customers within their particular niches in a self-organising way, which is characteristic of complex adaptive systems?

Digital media, the relationship communication-bridge between customers and marketers: Digital media provides communication tools to assist relationship building strategies between organisations and customers and offers the means to communicate in more meaningful ways (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010:41).

Generate meaningful experiences: The appointment of influencers and opinion leaders by organisations may provide a suitable tactic for organisations to leverage their communication through social media networks (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010:165). This proposition is an application of two-step flow (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:308), which is based on the idea that people (influencers) exert a greater affect on other people than the media. Other mechanisms for building meaningful experience include the generation of brand communities (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010:40). For example, the Harley Owners Group (HOG) is sponsored by Harley-Davidson and provides benefits (resources) to their members. These types of initiatives offer a way to integrate brands into customer's lifestyles and communities to make meaningful experiences (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010:42).

8.3.2 Service-dominant logic applicability

Service-dominant logic a relevant marketing paradigm: Fragmentation, as a characteristic of postmodernism, offers explanation for deconstruction and then reconstruction of entities as well as concepts. If one considers that fragmentation within the marketing discipline has given rise to a profusion of sub-disciplines each pursuing their own agenda within the framework of the marketing discipline, perhaps service-dominant logic offers a suitable paradigm to unite the various sub-disciplines within the overall discipline. Kuhn (1970:13) remarks that research development is optimally directed when united by a universally accepted paradigm.

8.4 INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The key topics for reflection within Chapter 4: Information communication technology were:

- Technology acceptance model;
- Interactivity;
- Complex systems; and
- Mobile media.

8.4.1 Technology acceptance model (TAM)

Are TAM constructs still valid?: The technology acceptance model has been subjected to numerous adjustments over time and depending on the context in which it has been applied. One of the key constructs of TAM is that of perceived ease of use. In view of the fact that society is becoming more technologically literate, the relevance of perceived ease of use becomes increasingly questionable. Perhaps the time has come to readdress the validity of perceived ease of use?

Are consolidated models sensible?: In view of today's postmodern society which encourages and accepts pluralism the notion of developing models that address technology with a unified approach, such as the *united theory of acceptance and use of technology* is debatable, particularly in a rapidly evolving field like information technology.

New models are an outcome of de-differentiation: The process of reconstructing models is aligned with the postmodern characteristic of de-differentiation.

Further limitations of the technology acceptance model (TAM): This author suggests there are four limitations of TAM, which have not been addressed by the current literature. Firstly, the model was developed in an organisational context where use of digital technology was largely confined to the workplace. In today's society people are more frequent users of technology, applying it to their personal needs (such as entertainment) and in the role of services outside the workplace (such as, drawing cash from ATMs, or paying for airline tickets online), which begs the question of how applicable TAM is beyond organisational situations? Secondly, the model was designed around the use of computing systems. Today numerous different types of technology systems exist (such as mobile phone technology, social networks sites, and various applications like navigation and gaming programmes), which takes digital technology beyond the scope of just computing systems. Each new technology system has its own set of barriers for acceptance or rejection. Can TAM as a model be universally applied to all these technologies? Thirdly, people are becoming more technology literate, as technology becomes common place in their daily lives. Fourthly, perhaps one could consider the adaption of TAM from

technology acceptance to technology rejection? It has been noted that rejection choices are just as important as acceptance choices in terms of individuals' characteristics.

8.4.2 Interactivity

Interactivity: new possibilities: Interactivity provides new and unconventional methods of communication between marketers and their customers.

Interactivity is a multi-dimensional concept: Whilst the author somewhat agrees with Rafaeli's (1988) perspective that humans are responsible for initiating interactivity through media, the author considers that the levels of interactivity of human operators is also dependent on the features of the media they utilise.

Interaction of human activity corresponds to 6th and 7th fundamental premises of Service-dominant logic: Rafaeli's (1988:119) view that interaction depends on human activity is important in the context of interactive marketing communication. This perspective of human activity aligns with the idea that it is the customer who decides if he or she wants to interact with a brand or enterprise and form a relationship, as indicated in the 6th and 7th foundational premises of service-dominant logic (6th FP: The customer is always a co-creator of value; 7th FP: The enterprise cannot deliver value, but only offer value propositions).

Media fragmentation reduces each mediums' audience through audience selectivity: The volume of media content has increased in response to media fragmentation. Correspondingly the ratio of content offerings to consumers has grown, which ultimately results in a reduction of audiences for each medium.

Perceived interactivity versus perceived usability: Sundar (2004:386) argues that users' perceived interactivity is confused with perceived usability. Sundar's (2004:386) basis for this argument is that one cannot define interactivity on user perceptions alone because user perceptions of interactivity are relative to the individual, and this perspective is unsound when it comes to interactive features of a medium. For instance a more

technologically literate individual will hypothetically be able to extract greater outputs of interactivity from an interactive system than a less technologically literate person, so the more technologically orientated individual could perceive a particular interactive system to be highly interactive, but the less technologically astute individual may perceive the same system to offer little interactivity because the limitations of the individual prevent the individual from accessing the full potential of the system.

Beyond tangible value creation: Bearing in mind the concept of value-in-use, conceivably one could generate communication offerings that provide meaningful value to customers. This notion stimulates one to consider that the process of interaction between brands and their consumers contributes to meaningful communication if used appropriately. For instance providing customers with relevant applications or offerings that are reflective of a brand's equity. This initiative provides a way of supplying consumers with an experience of the brand (directly or indirectly), so individuals may not necessarily physically experience the brand, but are able to do so mentally or emotionally.

Self-disclosure does not necessarily imply self-importance: People make sense of their worlds through the construction of stories; past, present and future episodes of their lives (Heeter 2000:6). This insight offers a reason behind some individuals' inclination to share events and occurrences in their lives on social network sites.

Disproportionate levels of interactivity: Interactivity (in the form of user-generated content) and hence adoption of interactivity, raises pertinent questions in the context of innovation adoption and the use of interactivity in marketing communication plans.

- Consider what the levels and rates of interactivity are amongst consumers?
- What is the proportion of content contributors to content users?
- How does the profile of content contributors differ to that of content users?

Benchmark interactivity levels to improve campaign sufficiency planning: Benchmarks for anticipated threshold levels of interactivity should be developed to indicate the potential level of feedback one can expect from interactive marketing communication campaigns using innovative platforms. Following the model of diffusion of innovation an estimation of

the penetration of an innovative communication platform against the population helps to indicate the type of reach the new platform could be expected to achieve against a given target population. In this way one could potentially estimate the degree of exposure required by a brand on a particular platform to attain minimum sufficiency levels to effectively reach its target audience via the platform in question; and correspondingly calculate the financial investment required to meet these levels of reach; and plausibly anticipate response levels from customers that interact with the communication.

8.4.3 Complex systems

Learn to navigate and negotiate complex adaptive systems: Marketers are urged not to target members of social networks system through traditional advertising efforts, but instead to apply a more participative approach (Kaplan & Haenlin 2010:65). The properties of social network systems are comparable to the properties of complex systems. It is suggested that marketers acknowledge these properties and utilise them in the development of marketing communication plans for social media networks.

8.4.4 Mobile media

Mobile media an intra-marketing mix platform: The mobile medium is flexible and possesses multiple capabilities which provide a means of implementation across the current marketing mix spectrum.

Drive innovation by taking advantage of a medium's inherent properties: The unique properties of mobile phones should be utilised by marketing communication strategies to maximise the effects of mobile phones as a medium in conjunction with user behaviour towards these devices. Pertinent properties and consumer behaviour relating to mobile phones include (Marketing Mix, 2008:32; Székely & Nagy, 2011:2191):

- Mobile phones are technology convergence devices possessing multi-functional capabilities (voice, data, video, audio, Internet access, location based services);
- They are personal devices;
- They are usually always on;

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- They are generally within arm's reach from their owners; and
 - They allow real-time communication to take place.

8.5 GENERATION Y

The key topics for reflection within Chapter 5: Generation Y were:

- Technology effects;
- Raising Generation Y;
- Retail shopping; and
- Marketing communication and Generation Y.

8.5.1 Technology effects

Today's culture is not the same as yesterday's: In general people need to change the way they think culture is constructed in order to understand how youth are using digital information communication technology (Samuels, 2008:219).

Leveraging social media connections: Social networks are a preferred point of contact amongst Generation Y. However, when marketers utilise these platforms to communicate with consumers they need to adapt their communication content and approach to a style that is consistent with the etiquette of the platform and its audience. For instance, in the social media space, marketers should consider designing communication that is visually appealing and not text heavy and take note of the size (bytes) of the communication, with respect to end users' bandwidth limitations and the time required to download the content.

New is better: Generation Y, want newness; they perceive new to be better and improved (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:180).

Marketing at hyper-speed: To maintain a sense of innovation, marketers should continually supply Generation Y with new information about products and position products as new commodities rather than product upgrades.

8.5.2 Raising Generation Y

Artificial progression?: To a certain extent, as a result of parental nurturing and provision, Generation Y have advanced up Maslow's hierarchy of needs, without having to personally fulfil each level of the pyramid. The question to ask is if people need to personally fulfil each stage to recognise their needs and appreciate that these have been attended to?

Disconnected cultures: Perhaps there is a cultural dissociation between postmodernism youth and their modern parents?

8.5.3 Shopping

Shopping equates to social currency: For Generation Y shopping is a way of connecting with their social circle and the act of shopping provides social currency. The more time Generation Y spends in shopping environments, the more time they spend with brands of interest to them, and the anticipation is that this will lead to acquisition.

Take advantage of Generation Y's impulsive behaviour: Generation Y act impulsively. This characteristic should be used by marketers to notify this segment of time limited offers. Mobile phones are a suitable medium to effect these types of promotions, which may be accessed conveniently by their users.

I am my brands: Shopping is an important part of Generation Y's identity building and the shopping environment also provides a venue for social interaction. Marketers targeting Generation Y would benefit from aligning their brand values with the aspirations of this generation and supplying these consumers with brand content orientated around a brand's equities to help drive purchase decisions.

Marketing to men in retail should be a secondary activity: When targeting men, marketers should keep interactions practical focussing on the product, offering suggestions that are solutions-orientated, according to the targets' needs, but these suggestions should not be perceived as prescriptive or advisory (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:134). Marketers could

consider using location based promotions on mobile phones when targeting male customers to subtly direct them to specific outlets.

For women shopping is an event or experience - not just a buy. When targeting women, marketers should take into account, in addition to the product being purchase, the experience offered by the store and the process of product acquisition. Women tend to talk about their shopping experiences which extend to more than just the product, they share their experiences with others and thus influence members of their networks. These personal testimonials provide powerful persuasion in terms of influencing people's decisions to accept or reject stores or brands through the proxy of a friend's opinion. Opinions (word-of-mouth) are important amongst friends.

Use word-of-mouth (WOM) as an activator to market to women in retail: Mobile phones are digital word-of-mouth media. The mobile phone provides direct access for one-to-one communication or one-to-mass conversing. The use of social media platforms has the potential for exponential influence. Touchpoints like *Twitter* and *Facebook* are word-of-mouth enablers and depending on the influencer and number of followers or friends they have, these channels could amplify the effects of the experience. Marketers should consider using promotions that will generate social experiences for this segment that they can proliferate through social media. For example, sharing best bargains, or giving consumers the opportunity to attend brand sponsored events, or rewarding consumers with gift vouchers.

8.5.4 Generation Y's attitudes towards brands

Leverage brand presence in consumer conversations: Marketers should participate in consumer-brand conversations, but not push their products directly. They should rather aim to be relevant and try to get close to this segment by relating to them through their interests or causes (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010:42; Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:28).

Contribute to Generation Y's identity needs:

- It is recommended that marketers leverage the emotional benefit of their brands and by doing so appeal to the emotional and social needs of this segment.
- Generation Y is opinionated and they want to be heard. Marketers should take advantage of this insight, by using mechanisms that seek this segment's point of view and demonstrate that they have acknowledged this consumer's voice.
- Appearances and being recognised are highly rated amongst Generation Y, so similarly to the previous point, the use of mechanisms such as offering this target segment an invitation to exclusive events, contributes to the target markets' social credentials and self-branding capital. These events present photograph and, or video opportunities, which serve to provide evidence of attendance, which the target market is able to share with his or her peers.

8.5.5 Marketing communication and Generation Y

The intra generation gap, know your who: The Generation Y cohort is not homogenous; differences exist between different age ranges. Therefore it is important to recognise the specific audience being targeted and select the appropriate communication approaches according to the segment.

Innovate: To attract Generation Y and give them a reason to return, marketers need to be innovative, fresh, new, constantly revamping and reinventing (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:174). This generation demonstrates attributes of innovators (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010:183), which suggests marketers could benefit from applying an innovative approach to marketing communication directed at this segment by ensuring communication assets are fresh, new, revamped or reinvented.

8.6 CONCLUSION

In conclusion this chapter has emphasised that characteristics of postmodernism are evident in society and affect marketing and/or marketing communication activities. It has alluded to potential implications. It has revealed insights into Generation Y with respect to

their attitudes towards digital media, as well as retail shopping and brands, in the context of marketing and/or marketing communication in a postmodern society. In summary, this chapter has highlighted key theoretical issues that arose during the course of the thesis and were stated as quasi-propositions. The quasi-propositions have been summarised within this chapter to draw concern of the continued use and application of unchanged theories, processes, and principles in a changed environment. It is intended to demonstrate the need for academic development and practitioner implementation to be attentive to the market or risk strategic drift.

The next chapter will discuss the findings from this chapter integrated with findings from the empirical results to draw final conclusions and recommendations for further research.