

CHAPTER 9

Conclusions and recommendations

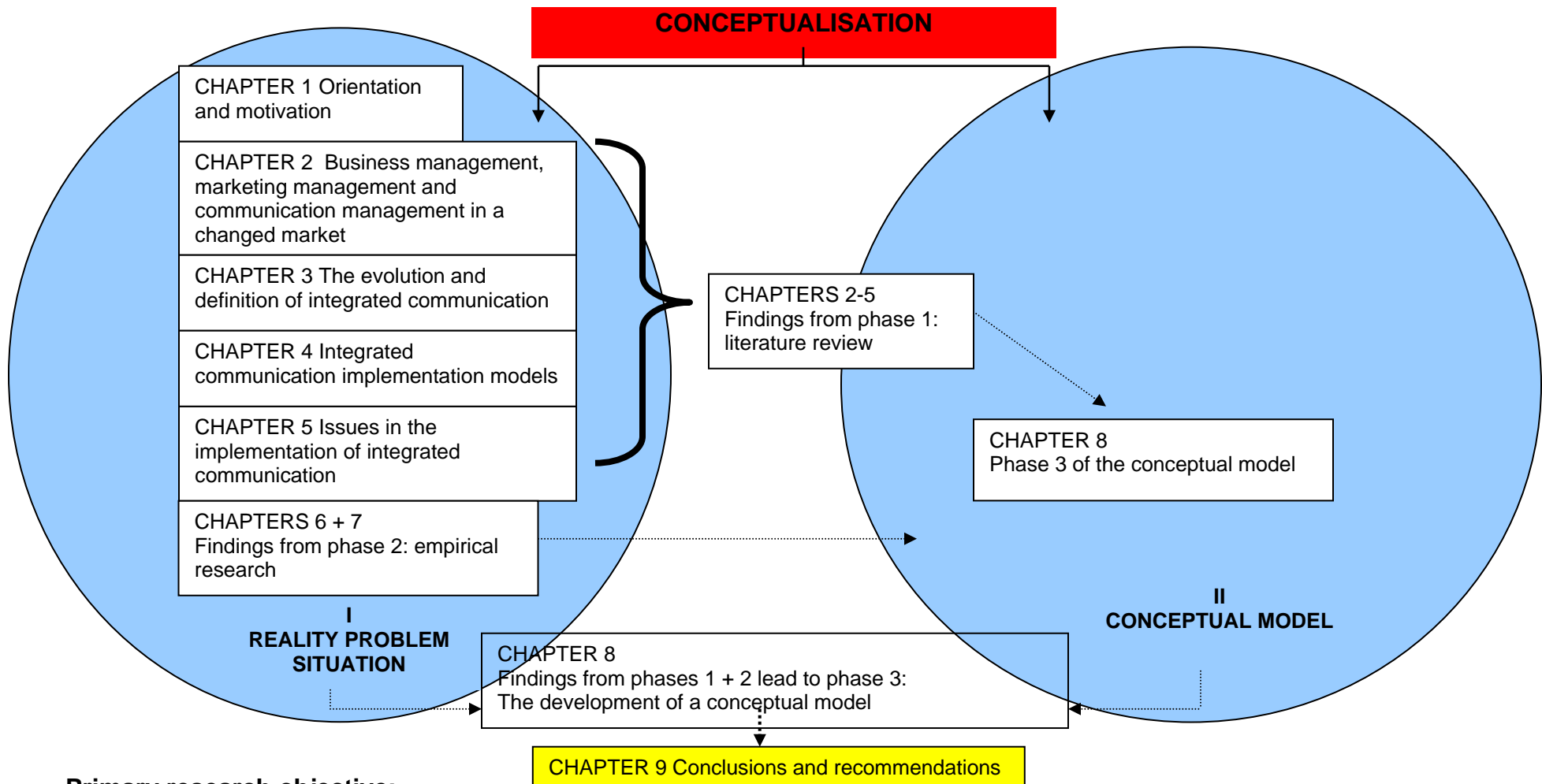
9.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 9 completes the full circle of research, by returning to the primary and secondary research objectives and by making concluding remarks about the study as well as the conceptual model for strategic integrated communication implementation in the South African business environment. Furthermore, the reliability and limitations of the study are expanded on. The chapter ends with suggestions for further research.

9.2 CONCLUSION OF FINDINGS RELATED TO RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

All the research objectives were addressed and the results emanating from them were included in the development of the conceptual implementation model for the management of strategic integrated communication in the South African marketplace, based on the Mitroff *et al.* (1974) model of problem solving (Figure 9.1), in the three defined phases of research.

Figure 9.1 The application of the systematic problem-solving model in relation to Chapter 9



Primary research objective:

To develop an implementation model for the management of strategic integrated communication in the South African marketplace

The model for the implementation of strategic integrated communication in the South African market could be significant, because South Africa, as is the case in global markets, experiences major difficulties in the implementation of integrated communication. However, although various models exist to assist organisations with integrated communication implementation, these models are predominantly Anglo-Saxon in their origin. Also, South African guidance, literature and research on this topic are limited. Most importantly, South African businesses need direction in implementing integrated communication, as this business landscape calls for unique integrated communication solutions in a post-apartheid country. Given this background of the need for a uniquely South African model, the research objectives were addressed as follows:

9.2.1 Strategic integrated communication in integrated communication implementation

It was found in the theory that integrated communication should undoubtedly be practised and implemented on a strategic level within the organisation, thereby addressing secondary research objective 1. Communication objectives should be aligned with the organisational goal and, more importantly, the strategic intent of the organisation. Then and only then, can communication and marketing management be regarded as being a strategic contribution to the business management of the organisation. Furthermore, only when integrated communication is practised and implemented on a strategic level can unity of effort be advanced through the strategic consistency of all communication and all efforts.

9.2.2 Existing universal concerns in integrated communication implementation

Secondary research objective 2 was to determine theoretically the perceptible current universal problematic issues in integrated communication

implementation. From scrutinising the theory in this regard, it became evident that various concerns exist regarding integrated communication implementation, which is predominantly linked to the barriers to the implementation of the concept. The barriers relate mostly to structural organisational barriers and barriers regarding the managers' perceptions regarding integrated communication. It should be noted that, although these barriers are the existing universal problematic issues in integrated communication from a theoretical perspective, many of them were also referred to by the respondents in the empirical phase of the study. Therefore, the theoretical barriers could be regarded as universal in terms of a South African perspective as well.

9.2.3 Global theoretical approaches to integrated communication implementation

Various global theoretical approaches to integrated communication implementation were discussed in focusing on six existing models (secondary research objectives 3 and 4). Although these models were all acceptable foundations in terms of integrated communication implementation, they were all discussed, commented on and critiqued. Based on these discussions, it became clear that integrated communication should be studied from a general systems theory approach, in order to ensure a holistic orientation. However, most of the existing models place too much emphasis on only one part of integrated communication, and in so doing, go against the principles of the concept, which is unity in *all* efforts of the organisation. For example, Grunig and Grunig (1998) place much emphasis on the communication itself, thereby encouraging turf battles in terms of this function, whereas Gronstedt (2000) focuses predominantly on integration with stakeholders and internally in the organisation, but no reference is made to the source of communication or, in other words, the communication function itself. Furthermore, Gronstedt (1996), for example, places emphasis on external messages, without referring to the importance of internal messages. Similarly, Hunter (1997) and (1999) focuses predominantly

on internal messages, without an external focus. Therefore, it could be contended that, although the existing models of integrated communication implementation could be regarded as a good starting point, they mostly lack the holistic orientation required by integrated communication to ensure concord of endeavours.

9.2.4 The current state of integrated communication implementation in South Africa

It could be argued that an integrated marketing communication, as opposed to an integrated orientation, still exists in the practice of the concept in the South African marketplace. This is evident in that, although integrated communication is regarded on a strategic level, agencies still tend to regard integration as a “one-voice, one-look approach”. The consequence of this is then that strategic consistency of all communication in the organisation cannot occur. The implication of this is that “unity of effort” cannot be promoted in building and nourishing stakeholder and brand relationships. It would appear that in South Africa, the ability of advertising and communication to provide a strategic integrated communication offering to clients is limited, as the focus is predominantly on external integration with the lack of internal horizontal and internal vertical integration. This is reinforced by the fact that the most common barrier identified pertained to issues relating to strategic management. Subsequently, in South Africa, agencies can be categorised as predominantly functioning in the first and second eras of integrated communication as defined in the chronological discussion of the evolution and the development definitions of integrated communication, with fragments of the third and fourth eras in defining integrated communication. Therefore, agencies’ fundamental model of business will have to adjust as they enter the stakeholder century with an emphasis on strategic alignment and consistency with business, marketing and communication objectives.

9.2.5 A conceptual model for integrated communication implementation in South Africa

The relation between the phases and the flow of the study is presented in Figure 9.1 to indicate the positioning of this chapter in relation to the Mitroff *et al.* (1974) model in developing the conceptual model for integrated communication implementation in South Africa. The conceptual model of integrated communication implementation in the South African marketplace recognises, based on the above conclusions that the organisation must learn from its environment and stakeholders in order to build and nourish profitable relationships with the organisational brand. Also, the organisation should reposition itself and its strategic goal continuously according to what is learnt from the environment, in order to survive in a dynamic, challenging post-apartheid South Africa. Consequently, communication objectives and strategies should be driven by, and aligned with, the strategic intent of the organisations.

9.3 CONCLUDING REMARKS

To address the primary research objective, the grand theory of this study was indicated as a general systems theory approach. Similar to the grand theory of this study, the proposed implementation model for the management of strategic integrated communication was also inherently based on systems thinking and the general systems theory. In the case of this model, the intention of the use of the systems theory is that the phenomenon of integrated communication implementation is viewed holistically as a set of interacting forces between the organisation, the stakeholders and the changing environment, and in the three-dimensional, systems-based graphical depiction of the model. The systems theory is also concerned with problems of relationships, structure and interdependence rather than with the constant attributes of objects. In this model the focus is on the relationships, structure and interdependence of the parts of the model, rather than on the parts in the model itself, thereby, emphasising

learning organisational principles to constantly reposition the organisation in relation to its stakeholders and the environment.

Furthermore, based on systems thinking, the meta-theoretical framework of the study proposed three domains for the purpose, which is intrinsic in the proposed conceptual implementation model for the management of strategic integrated communication. Firstly, the business management domain is represented in the two key principles of the model, namely that a) the strategic intent of the organisation drives all communication and b) learning organisational principles continuously reposition the organisation. This therefore implies that an organisation that follows this implementation model for the management of strategic integrated communication can be regarded as a stakeholder century organisation, taking a broader, stakeholder-based strategic view of integrated communication in the organisation, which is in touch with a changing environment and the needs and wants of its stakeholders. Communication consequently becomes a business approach and not merely another function in the proposed implementation model for the management of strategic integrated communication.

The second and third domains of this study are those of marketing and communication management. In the proposed conceptual integrated communication implementation model, marketing and communication management are combined into one area, namely the renaissance communicator. The key element of the renaissance communicator is that this could be regarded as the potential “definitive” practice of communication on a strategic level in the organisation. The renaissance communicator is regarded as the possible proposal of communication answers to organisational problems, focusing on internal *and* external communication to promote increased organisational reflexivity to the greater system in which it is functioning and contributing to organisational successes.

The significance of the proposed model is fourfold. Firstly, it incorporates the ten drivers of integrated communication, which indicates that the most central concepts in integrated communication were considered. Secondly, the model incorporates comments and critiques made in the discussion of the existing models of integrated communication implementation to ensure that the conceptual model addresses integrated communication implementation from a holistic perspective. Thirdly, the conceptual model addresses the most pertinent universal problematic barriers in integrated communication implementation, to ensure that it remains realistic in terms of the marketplace challenges experienced. Fourthly, it consciously incorporated specific issues and impediments pertaining to the South African marketplace as indicated from the empirical research. This was done to ensure that the model addresses the needs of the South African business landscape by promoting *unity of effort* through the three integration areas of organisational, stakeholder and environmental integration in order to build and nourish relationships with stakeholders in a changing South African environment.

9.4 RELIABILITY OF THE STUDY

Mouton (2001:11) states that the aim of research is to produce reliable data. Reliability is defined by Babbie (2002:447) as the measurement method that suggests that the same data would have been collected each time in repeated observations of the same phenomenon. Huysamen (1995:130) similarly defines reliability as the degree to which the instrument produces equivalent results for repeated trials.

Cooper and Schindler (1998:171) propose that stability, equivalence and internal consistency should be used as perspectives on reliability. Firstly, stability is said to be, based on these authors' views, stable if consistent results can be secured with repeated measurements with the same instrument. In the case of this study, the empirical part (phase 2), where a measurement (the in-depth, face-to-face

interview) was used, the same instrument was used in the pilot study as in the final study. The research method produced the same results in the pilot as in the final study. The results of the pilot study were in keeping with those of the final study, which indicates that the research method was internally consistent.

According to Cooper and Schindler (1998:172), the second perspective on reliability considers how much error may be introduced by different investigators or different samples of items being studied. As this study was only done by one researcher, the second perspective on reliability concerning the different investigators remains an open question. Also, only one sample group was considered in the items that were studied, and therefore it should be considered that another sample group might draw different conclusions, although this sample focused on the top ten advertising and communication agencies at the time, and should therefore be relatively representative of the current state of the South African advertising and communication field.

A third approach to reliability, proposed by Cooper and Schindler (1998:173), uses only one administration of an instrument or test to assess consistency or homogeneity between the items in the measurement instrument. In the case of the current study, the measurement instrument in phase 2 was tested in the pilot study to ensure internal consistency of the interview questions, in order to secure reliability in the final study. However, it should be taken into consideration that errors could have been present in the execution of the empirical research process.

Additionally, this current study made use of three phases to increase the reliability of the research. However, as the study was based on the Mitroff model, it should be emphasised that the Mitroff model was not applied in its totality and the focus of this study was merely on developing a conceptual model for strategic integrated communication implementation for the South African market.

9.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Any study has inherent and specific limitations, and for this study, the following limitations are identified:

- There is a lack of cases and examples within the sphere of integrated communication in the South African context, and specifically in the sphere of the implementation thereof. This resulted in the use of international examples of best practice in the study. It could be argued that these examples do not necessarily apply to the South African context, which further necessitated the need for information about the implementation of integrated communication from a South African perspective. The reason that there are no significant South African examples is that integrated communication is not yet used optimally in this context.
- The respondents in the sample did, in some cases, not have the desired level of theoretical knowledge to answer the questions asked of them, and some questions needed a level of clarification for them to answer them effectively.

9.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has identified four potential topics for future research:

- Firstly, research could be conducted to test the proposed implementation model for the management of strategic integrated communication in the South African business landscape in order to move the model from merely a conceptual model to a scientific model – the third circle in the Mitroff *et al.* (1974) model used for the methodology of this study. This study focused on the development of a conceptual implementation model for the management of strategic integrated communication in the South African market. It is suggested that research be focused on the development of a scientific

implementation model for the management of strategic integrated communication in the South African business environment.

- Secondly, based on the findings of this study, it could be argued that an expectation gap exists between what advertising and communication agencies offer and what their market requires, with specific reference to the implementation of integrated communication in the client's organisation. Research should be conducted to develop guidelines on integrated communication implementation, specifically for advertising and communication agencies in the South African context. This should assist the agency in bridging this expectation gap between the service they offer and the requirements of its clients.
- Thirdly, research could be conducted to determine the differences between the implementation of strategic integrated communication in small versus large organisations. Subsequently, these differences in implementation could be addressed through size-specific implementation models of strategic integrated communication.
- Fourthly, research could be carried out to determine how *all* the barriers to integrated communication, including specifically the barriers of resistance to change, politics and power, compensational barriers and organisations that think they are already integrated, could be overcome successfully.