
CHAPTER 2 Postmodernism

2.1 INTRODUCTION

These days anything goes?

Today, black, white, renaissance, cubism, punk, grunge, atheists, religious devotees, homosexual, heterosexual, transgender, conservative, liberal, monogamy, polygamy, working mothers, stay-home dads, nuclear families, single parenthood, octo-mums and multiple variations in between, all cohabit the same society. How is it possible for the presence and general acceptance of so many different cultural modes in one period? A postmodernism worldview may provide a plausible explanation. Jameson (2006:484) and Samuels (2008:221) support the notion of postmodernism as a culturally dominant concept, which allows for the coexistence of other divergent traits to subsist simultaneously within the domain of postmodernism. Postmodernism supports the idea that social realities are dynamic, forming and reforming in response to environmental stimuli (Brown 1994:28; Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:324; McQuail, 2010:129). South Africa's *rainbow nation* bears testament to a functional multicultural society.

The importance of culture in society is undeniable. Culture shapes peoples' attitudes and actions; and biases their thinking and behaviour towards conventional orders of their particular societies (Dominick, 2009:45; Kellner & Durham, 2006:ix; Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:300). Culture brings people meaning, for example, in their identities and political views. It encompasses peoples' day-to-day activities and practices, from congregating at particular venues, such as meeting for coffee, attending events or going shopping, to the media they consume (Dominick, 2009:45; Kellner & Durham, 2006:xiv; Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:300). The media depicts cultural acts and in so doing perpetuates and creates societal norms and human understanding (Baran & Davis, 2003:223; Jensen & Helles, 2011:518; Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:300). Kellner and Durham (2006:ix) liken media to a facilitator of societal reproduction. Commodification of culture in the media, underscores

various media agencies' agendas, for instance, advertisers, news broadcasts, talk shows and other formulated programmes (Baran & Davis, 2003:331; Dominick, 2009:45). The rise of individuals' personal agendas should not be ignored either with individuals creating and sharing their own content via computer-mediated media. Audiences, however, may or may not interpret the communications as the originators intended them to (Dominick, 2009:45). Consider, for example, the South African National Broadcaster (SABC) marketing slogan, "Feel it. It is here", for the 2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa (Germaner, 2010), which was widely misinterpreted as "Philip is here", and thus "Philip" became a local in country nickname for the tournament.

The impact of media is multifaceted and so integrated within cultural fibre that it is perhaps limiting and naïve to narrow the foci or restrict studies to one approach and attempt to single out a topic of enquiry. Kellner and Durham (2006:ix) support the application of multiple theoretical and methodological approaches. The application of more theories to an issue gives greater perspective of understanding the concern from different contexts (Kellner & Durham, 2006:xii). Similarly the use of multiple stakeholder approaches to an investigation will reveal insights from respective stakeholders involved in the research and contribute to a more balanced understanding than a one-sided study would achieve. However, the logistics of applying a multiple stakeholder approach are not always feasible.

In an ever changing world new explanations are required to understand events, implications, actions and reactions. This is not to say that previous theory and explanations are incorrect, rather it is the progression and development of prior theory that has advanced academic pursuits of understanding the social sciences (Mouton, 1996:15). According to Kuhn (1970), different worldviews dominate different eras and for that reason influence the research of specific periods. The specific worldview applied to a body of research embeds the study within the context of that worldview. Therefore studies and findings developed within the guidance of one worldview may not be relevant or applicable under the framework of alternative worldviews.

In pursuit of knowledge development and problem solving certain assumptions and limitations prevail to isolate the concern within specific boundaries of the investigation.

Whilst this logic has been applied to this study, it should be recognised that conditions in the real world are dynamic. The real world is an open system that interacts chaotically with components from both its internal and external environments in unpredictable ways (Brown, 1995:89; Stapleton, 2008:19). It should be acknowledged that these complex interactions exist and are beyond control.

The preceding discussion has touched on the concept of constant change; remarked on associations between society, culture and media; and introduced postmodernism as a cultural concept through the deconstruction and reconstruction of cultural realities. The remainder of the chapter will motivate the appropriateness of postmodernism as a worldview for this study, rooting the study within the worldview of postmodernism; and serve as a critical frame of reference for this study's discourse, by extending the application of postmodernism to the marketing discipline with specific reference to the role of mobile phone media and digital social media in marketing communication.

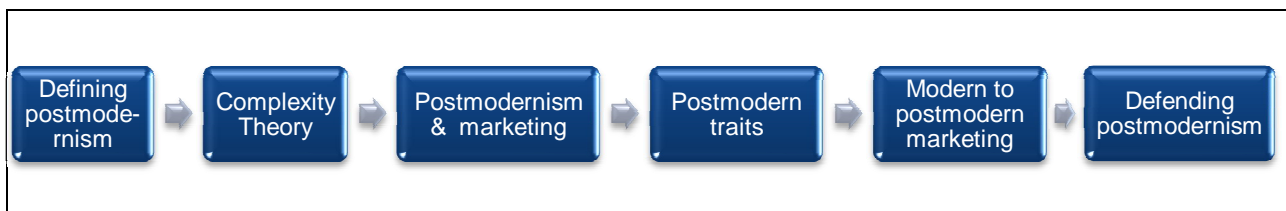
A three step process was applied in this evaluation, as per Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Three step evaluation process to evaluate postmodernism

| STEPS |
|--|
| 1. Define postmodern trait |
| 2. Postmodernism trait in a marketing and/or marketing communication context |
| 3. Relevance of postmodern trait for digital media (mobile phone and social media) |

The framework for this chapter is depicted in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Chapter framework of Chapter 2



2.2 WHAT IS POSTMODERNISM?

Postmodernism means different things to different disciplines (Brown, 2006:212; Brown, 1994:28; Firat *et al.*, 1995:41). Some of the disciplines applying postmodernism include: architecture, art history, anthropology, civil engineering, cultural studies, economics, education, geography, history, law, literature, management, marketing, media studies, organisation studies, philosophy, political science, psychology, sociology, theology, women's studies and zoology (Brown, 1995:61).

Despite different interpretations of postmodernism, there is general consensus that it is foremost a cultural phenomenon (Brown, 1994:28; Firat & Dholakia, 2006:123; Jameson, 2006:484; Poster, 2006:533; Samuels, 2008:221). There are several facets to the cultural perspective of postmodernism. If one recognises that marketing is part of culture (Brown, 1995:107; Firat & Dholakia, 2006:124) then postmodern cultural aspects become important factors in the context of marketing. An outline of common postmodern cultural aspects follows.

- *Economic basis.* Forces of globalisation and capitalism have resulted in increased production and correspondingly increased consumption. In the process the world operates chaotically and 24/7 (Brown, 2006:213).
- *Multiculturalism.* Postmodernism recognises that the world comprises of multiple and diverse cultures (Firat & Dholakia, 2006:126; Firat *et al.*, 1995:41; Samuels, 2008:221). Examples include: the increased awareness of minority group interests and class neutral issues, the erosion of the nuclear family, fulfilment of multiple roles, reduced dependence on religion, and a drive towards self-actualisation (Brown, 1994:35). Globalisation could be considered to attribute to the multiculturalism aspect of postmodernism, because one of its outcomes is greater awareness of different societies, cultures and practices, which in turn has improved the general public's understanding and acceptance of diversity.
- *Tolerates difference.* Although postmodernism tolerates difference, it does not eliminate preference (Firat & Dholakia, 2006:127; Samuels, 2008:221).
- *Social constructivism.* Truths and values are socially constructed (Firat *et al.*, 1995:40; Samuels, 2008:221).

- *Poststructuralism or deconstruction.* Poststructuralism or deconstruction is the acceptance of the fact that a single text or sign may represent multiple meanings depending on the perspective of the receiving audience (Firat & Dholakia, 2006:126; O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2002:110; Samuels, 2008:222). This is the realisation that some conditions may not receive wide spread acceptance by society, which is understandable, not everyone should be required to conform, but these conditions can be critically engaged with (Firat & Dholakia, 2006:125). Poststructuralism and social constructivism are closely associated to relativism. The principle of relativism holds that a set of beliefs and truths are not necessarily applicable to all cultures or across time periods (O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2002:119).
- *Pastiche, the aesthetic manifestation of postmodernism.* Pastiche entails the mixing and recombination of various aspects of different cultures, which are typically depicted as artistic expression and may be reflected in media content (Brown, 2006:213; O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2002:113; Samuels, 2008:222). The media is representative of the present cultural and social environment (Kellner & Durham, 2006:xx).
- *Focus on the present.* Postmodern culture deals with the here and now (Firat & Dholakia, 2006:128).
- *Changes in knowledge and thought.* Brown (2006:214) draws comparisons of knowledge orientation between modernism and postmodernism (articulated in Table 2.2). This change of orientation with its lack of universal truths allows one to select relative options through preference rather than dictating a single best approach to a situation.

Table 2.2: Comparisons of knowledge orientation between modern and postmodern conditions

| MODERN | POSTMODERN |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective knowledge • Universal laws • Meaningful generalisations • Absolute truths • Objectivity • Spectatorship | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boundedness knowledge • Lack of universal laws • Limits of generalisations • Irrationality • Subjectivity • Participation |

Source: Conceptualised from Brown (2006:214)

Postmodernism is further distinguished from modernism, through its rejection of modernism's grand narratives (Brown 2006:214; Firat & Dholakia, 2006:126; Kumar, 2005:107; O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2002:113), namely: history and progress; truth and freedom; reason and revolution; science and industrialism.

Western humanity's progress, with achievements like capitalism, scientific discovery and democracy, are outcomes of modernity that were accelerated under the guidance of grand narratives and universal practices that applied the best option to each scenario (Firat & Dholakia, 2006:127; Samuels, 2008:222). Modernism is characterised by rationality, linear progress and ideology (Berthon & Katsikeas, 1998; Firat & Dholakia, 2006:128). Brown (1995:69), acknowledges that modernism "has provided unimaginable material well-being, incalculable knowledge accumulation, astonishing aesthetic accomplishment and incredible technological innovation", but considers the costs incurred to achieve these gains to outweigh their benefits. "The modernisation of western society, for all its industrialisation, bureaucratisation and secularisation, has contributed not only to a gradual decline in morality, charity, spirituality, humanity and the sense of community but an inexorable increase in crime, delinquency, deviance, drug abuse, mental illness, neuroses, waste, hedonism, materialism, anomie and alienation" (Brown, 1995:69).

The text box that follows encloses the first quasi-proposition of the thesis. The role of the quasi-propositions, which consist of questions and/or propositions, (as outlined in Chapter 1) is to reflect on the scope of existing knowledge and its applicability in a postmodern society. This series of reflections will be summarised in Chapter 8 to provide an overview of key theoretical issues that were contemplated in this study.

Modernism's necessity

Perhaps these aspects of modernisation, highlighted by Brown (1995), provide a cautionary tale, a lesson in the consequences of actions and the need for sustainability. Conceivably the undesirable aspects of modernism have contributed to a changed approach, in the form of postmodernism to mitigate these negative effects. This stimulates one to contemplate if modernism was a necessary movement to advance humanity; and what position humanity would find itself in today if it were not for the modernism movement?

The modernism movement is particularly pertinent to the issue of technology. Modernism has been credited for “incredible technological innovation” (Brown 1995:69). According to Firat and Dholakia (2006:123), the shift from modernism to postmodernism is a result of a dramatic cultural change and accelerated development in technology, especially in the domain of digital communication and electronic transaction, which collectively have driven change and continue to transform culture. Kumar (2005:7) cites technology as a significant propellant of globalisation through both the greater connectivity and flow of information that it is has been able to achieve. Technology advances have also driven the transformation from standardised mass production outputs using equipment dedicated to a single function, to product diversity by means of flexible robotics and computerised manufacturing methods (Brown, 1994:35).

Poster (2006:533) brings together the association of postmodern culture and new communication systems. He rationalises that new communication systems not only increase the efficiency dimension in terms of information exchanges through increased productivity, but also prompt widespread change in culture, with specific reference to how identities are built. Poster (2006:533) references changes in communication systems of the Middle Ages (moving from face-to-face to print transactions for interactions to take place between traders at a distance) that were necessitated to further trade exchanges within the merchant culture of this period as an analogy to the new communication systems of present day and the impact these systems have on culture. Poster (2006:533) considers new communication systems to improve life and social equity.

This sentiment is echoed in the wide dispersion of the Internet and the mobile telephone communication system, which contributes to the promotion of equitable communication in society. The implications of this system resonate in McLuhan (2006:108) who claimed, “the ‘message’ of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs”. McLuhan (2006:108), further notes that, “the medium shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action”.

Technology drives postmodern culture

It is therefore reasonable to conclude that technology has been an important precursor and perpetuator of postmodern culture.

As with any societal or cultural movement, postmodernism is a culmination of multiple forces interacting within a specific period. Whether or not one chooses to classify different eras, unquestionably the society and culture of today are not what they were yesterday, nor what they will be in the future.

This notion of change in society, could be considered as a form of regeneration, which in turn is a manifestation of Baudrillard's postmodern hyperreal concept of *simulacra* (that is a copy of a copy which has no original) where through reproduction of structures and situations humanity occupies "a universe strangely similar to the original" (Baudrillard, 2006:460).

2.3 POSTMODERNISM: COMPLEXITY THEORY

This thesis takes the position that social entities (individuals, communities, organisations, industries) are complex systems operating in a volatile environment. Accepting this position can be disquieting. Systems in a constant state of flux lack stability, are unpredictable, and are constantly changing in response to environmental influences. Attempting to sustain equilibrium under conditions of fluctuating variables would be challenging, and possibly detrimental, because, despite ongoing adjustments it would be impossible for the entity to retain equilibrium with every variable, so it would have to select variables to align with. Inevitably by aligning with a limited number of variables the entity would become detached from its overall environment as a result of unpredictable dynamics between variables at each point in time.

At this stage it would be pertinent to review some aspects of complexity (environmental determinism, megamarketing, non-linearity, positive feedback, edge of chaos) with respect to organisations in particular (although the concepts apply equally to other entities) and addressing issues of complexity relating to communication.

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- *Environmental determinism* takes the view that environmental forces are beyond the organisation's control and as such the environment determines the shape of the organisation. At the other end of the spectrum is *megamarketing*, which states that organisations can exert some influence on their external environment, for example, through lobbying, so the organisation is not entirely at the mercy of the external environment (Stapleton, 2008:9).
 - *Non-linearity* is a characteristic of complex systems. This implies that inputs and interactions between them do not achieve predictable outcomes and the system never reaches equilibrium. These characteristics of complexity are evident in social systems. Social systems are multidimensional; they are unbounded; and the rules of the system change over time as the system readjusts (Stapleton, 2008:20).
 - In non-linear systems the *edge of chaos* is the interface between stability and disorder, which is characterised by dis-structure, which gives these systems the flexibility to react in a volatile environment without collapsing into an entropic state (Stapleton, 2008:14).
 - *Adaptive systems* are self-maintaining and self-managing systems that operate far from equilibrium, but are environmentally dependent (Stapleton, 2008:20). They are characterised by four traits: a) they comprise of numerous agents acting at random, not hierarchical; b) they continuously re-organise, forming as many levels as needed; c) they require energy to sustain them, if they are not sustained they will dwindle out; and d) they have capacity to learn (Stapleton, 2008:25).
 - *Positive feedback* is in direct contrast to negative feedback. Where negative feedback is used as a regulatory control to regain equilibrium, positive feedback augments the direction of change to sustain disequilibrium, small fluctuations have the capability to magnify great change in unstable systems (Stapleton, 2008:14). Organisations electing to apply the negative feedback mechanism to their organisations run the risk of hampering their development and may find themselves occupying an artificial position. The act of continuously readjusting to be in equilibrium with a particular aspect of the environment will cause the organisation (for example) to move further and further away from its intended position, which may render it uncompetitive. This aspect is especially applicable to marketing communication whose methods are challenged by current chaotic environments.

Two notable variables affecting today's environment are a) technology (Schultz & Schultz, 2004:12), specifically developments in digital communication and b) loss of power from the organisation to the customer (Schultz & Schultz, 2004:161). Ageing marketing models are not equipped to compute changes to these variables and accommodate new ones. The current mix of technology, society and economic influences have created new human actions that were not previously possible (Rheingold, 2002:xii).

A state of complexity implies that organisations need to be sensitive to fluctuations in their operating environments and exercise flexibility to respond to changes for the purposes of positively benefiting their business.

2.4 POSTMODERNISM AND MARKETING

Marketing developments have a tendency to mirror those of culture (Brown, 1995:107; Firat & Dholakia, 2006:124; Procter & Kitchen, 2002:145). This section will address the affect of postmodernism in marketing and/or marketing communication. Although elements of modernism are still relevant to marketing it is the intention of this discourse to emphasize postmodernism aspects of marketing.

Firat and Dholakia (2006:133) use the metaphor of theatre to convey the transformation in marketing from modern to postmodern. The stage, props, actors, directors and performance represent the professionally engineered aspects of business and marketing disciplines and the theatre audience represents the market. In modern marketing the staging entities were co-ordinated by their directors and the performance was independent of their non-participatory audience. The audience were passive observers that were *talked at*. On the other hand the postmodern marketing condition invites the audience to get on the stage and interact with the performance to *talk with* the staging entities and be involved in the production as co-performers or collaborators. This implies that customers are not only interacting with the official stage crew (marketing entity), but also with other members of the audience (customers and prospects) in a production through which they produce their consumption experience. Firat *et al.* (1995:42) refer to this process as a “reversals in

production and consumption”. Audience interactions (customer-to-customer) provide a mechanism for customers to share lived brand experiences. If marketing is about serving customer needs and wants, the customer should be involved in the process; it is human nature for people to want to participate in elements that affect their lives (Firat & Dholakia, 2006:137). The theatre metaphor is a useful way to visualise stakeholder interactions in postmodern marketing.

To understand postmodernism’s role in marketing it would be constructive to examine the various themes that underlie postmodernism, which will be covered next.

2.5 POSTMODERNISM TRAITS

Different interpretations of postmodernism across various disciplines have resulted in a lack of consensus on precise definitions of postmodernism and its inherent characteristics (Brown 1995:106; O’Shaughnessy & O’Shaughnessy, 2002:110). Postmodern characteristics are not mutually exclusive and tend to coalesce into each other (Brown, 2006:226; Firat & Dholakia, 2006:128) this will become apparent in the ensuing discussions. However, despite these challenges attempts have been made to define traits (Berthon & Katsikeas, 1998; Brown, 1994:38). Table 2.3 summarises classifications of postmodernism traits with respect to the marketing discipline. There is some degree of overlap between classifications; and differences in terminology are more likely a result of synonyms or absorption of traits into another. A lack of clarity is a noticeable condition of postmodernism mainly because the movement extols multiplicity.

Table 2.3: Traits of postmodernism

| BERTHON & KATSKEAS (1998) | BROWN (1994,1995) | FIRAT & DHOLAKIA (2006) | FIRAT ET AL. (1995) |
|--|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hyperreality • Fragmentation • De-differentiation • Paradox • Time and space • Anti-foundationalism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hyperreality • Fragmentation • De-differentiation • Pastiche • Chronology • Anti-foundationalism • Pluralism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hyperreality • Fragmentation • Decentering • Juxtapositions • Difference | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hyperreality • Fragmentation • Reversals of production and consumption • Decentring of the subject • Paradoxical juxtapositions (of opposites) • Loss of commitment |

Source: Conceptualised from Berthon and Katskeas (1998); Brown (1994,1995); Firat and Dholakia (2006); Firat, Venkatesh and Dholakia (1995)

For analytical purposes Brown’s (1995) traits have provided the structure for discussion, because Brown contextualises how these traits have manifested in marketing more so than other authors. However other scholar’s assessments have been incorporated into this critique. Therefore, postmodernism characteristics of fragmentation, de-differentiation, hyperreality, pastiche, anti-foundationalism and pluralism will be reviewed through a three step evaluation process, as outlined in the introductory paragraphs (refer to Table 2.1). To reiterate, firstly, the postmodern trait will be defined; secondly, the trait will be considered in a marketing context with emphasis on marketing interfaces with consumers; and thirdly where relevant applications of the trait in terms of marketing communication through digital media (social media and mobile phone media) will be suggested by the author, elaborating on the most salient opportunities of the trait, as conceptualised from the literature. The hybrid nature of digital media is such that it duplicates features from other media. With this understanding, in the following discussion where postmodernism has been applied to other media, inferences will be drawn against mobile phone media and social media. It must be further noted that specific applications of mobile phone media and social media will be addressed in Chapter 4.

2.5.1 Fragmentation

“Fragmentation refers to the seemingly inexorable disintegration and demise of political stability, social organisation, mass market economics, the unified self, the nature and grounds of knowledge, and inevitably, the

all-pervasive, disconnected array of vivid images generated by the increasingly hydra-headed media” (Brown, 1995:106).

Fragmentation: Defining attributes

In the context of postmodernism fragmentation refers to chaos, the dissolution of established systems and the relationships between entities within a system (Berthon & Katsikeas, 1998; Brown, 1995:106; Firat & Dholakia, 2006:131). Postmodernism’s apparent destruction of domains does not eliminate them, instead, it deconstructs and then reconstructs them into multiple sub-domains, as relevant to different sectors of interest. This micro-segmentation aspect of postmodernism has not escaped criticism, because a micro orientation neglects macro perspectives (Best & Kellner, 1991). However with the extensive multiplicity and variability that the marketing discipline faces it is often forced to function at a micro-level, so from a marketing position opting for a micro perspective over a macro perspective may stand to reason. This debate will be resumed in Chapter 3 in discussions concerning the concept of integrated marketing communication.

Conceivably the formation of networks (physical or virtual) maintains linkages (tight or loose) between different fragments of society (people or entities). Consumers, for example, participate in multiple groups, which infers that the consumer participates in multiple consumption experiences, although these are not necessarily related episodes. Fragmentation represents a lack of commitment to any particular course (Brown, 2006:217; Firat & Dholakia, 2006:125).

Fragmentation: Marketing context

Micro-segmentation raises challenges for both consumers and marketers. Markets are fragmenting into smaller and smaller segments, and not just consumer segments, product segments too are also seeking niche demands (Brown, 1995:46; Procter & Kitchen, 2002:147). Take an arbitrary category like shampoo for example; which includes variants for fine, coloured, greasy, dry, volume-seeking, curly, straight, and shiny hair amongst others.

Consumers are inundated with choice and are obligated to constantly assess their needs.

Consumer conundrums

Should consumers continue purchasing the brand they have always used, or try a new variant, or switch brands? How do they decide; is it through advertising, sampling, promotions, testimonials, word-of-mouth, brand loyalty, a combination of these or on a whim? Is it any wonder that consumer buying behaviour has become unpredictable?

Consumers are defined by their choices

It could be argued that, through micro-segmentation, marketers are directly responsible for this consumer conundrum. Nevertheless as a result of micro-segmentation marketers have been able to meet consumer needs; perhaps fulfilling some needs consumers did not know they had (Firat & Dholakia, 2006:127). According to Procter and Kitchen (2002:147), the postmodern consumer might not necessarily know what he or she wants but knows what he or she does not want. The decision one makes about rejecting an offering is still a choice; it is as much a decision as that taken when selecting a specific offering. Thus conscious rejection choices made by an individual contribute to his or her characteristics as much as the acceptance choices made.

However, to overcome the issue of multiple markets, marketers may have to resort to alternative marketing and/or marketing communication approaches, in order to successfully portfolio-manage brands and their respective variants. A service or goods category audience may be demographically identical, however when it comes to promoting specific variants, psychographic and or physiological attributes become important segmentation differentiators. So should a marketer produce multiple commercials to reach its different target segments? Brown (1995:109) remarks on a Coca-Cola campaign that produced twenty-six different television commercials, for the same product, to target its different market segments. There are unquestionably less expensive media approaches.

In terms of the media environment, mass media has not only fragmented into multiple forms (newspaper, print, television, radio, the Internet and mobile phone media to mention a few) (Brown, 1995:106; Firat *et al.*, 1995:42), but also within each media type there is incremental fragmentation through the volume of different publications, channels, websites, applications on offer; local, regional and national media splits; and a catering for niche pockets of interest (Berthon & Katsikeas, 1998). Somewhere in this sea of media marketers need to locate and connect to their audiences and minimise fragmentation of

their communication. Furthermore, the issue of consumer choice is just as pertinent when it comes to determining which media the consumer uses.

Combating fragmentation

Some alternatives to mass media approaches, to combat the condition of fragmentation, have been suggested, as follows.

- For example, customer profiling through sophisticated data management is a possibility (Brown, 1995:108), through tracking purchase behaviour via loyalty cards or through other means, like tracking individuals' digital media patterns to produce customised or personalised communication. Although access to individuals' personal information, and use of their data, is a contentious issue in an increasingly electronically connected world, considering the potential for misappropriation of data. Methods of retrieving personal information and manner of use could be perceived as invasion of privacy.
- Other non-mass means for marketers to reach consumers include promotions, discount vouchers, trial offers, gifts with purchase, and buy one get one free propositions.
- Alternatively one could form an interest group or save capital resource by targeting existing groups (either physical or virtual communities). Grönroos (2005:2-3) is understood to favour the latter, with a longer-term customer-centric approach to marketing through the concept of value-in-use. Value-in-use is the value customers obtain from using services or goods, and only the customer can assign a value to the goods or services used, thus motivating the customer-centric approach. Value-in-use forms part of service marketing and relationship marketing practices (Grönroos, 2005:2), which centre on creating relationships with customers to initiate and maintain interactions with customers. An intention of developing customer relationships is loyalty and therefore long-term sustainability for repeat purchases. Various marketing approaches will be addressed in Chapter 3, which pertains to marketing specifically.

The above commentary has been limited to fragmentation encountered at anticipated interfaces between customers and marketers. Fragmentation is prevalent in other areas of marketing such as supplier networks, distribution channels (e-stores and physical outlets), and within the structure of marketing organisations which have undergone de-layering. Firat and Dholakia's (2006:129) view of fragmentation is similar to Brown's (1995) views of hyperreality and pastiche traits, as the structure of this section follows Brown's (1995) classification of postmodern traits, therefore Firat and Dholakia's view of fragmentation will be contained within the relevant section. These interpretive differences are in themselves

illustrative of postmodern traits coalescing and blurring of definitions between characteristics.

Fragmentation: Marketing communication applications through digital media

Following on from the discussion of fragmentation in marketing, mobile phone and social media present several opportunities to facilitate customised communication at a micro level. Thus achieving breakthrough in a cluttered mass media landscape to tap into unique value propositions of mobile and social media, such as personalisation, privacy, convenience and localisation (Varnali, Toker & Yilmaz, 2011:viii); these include database marketing, interactive marketing and relationship marketing.

Mobile phones have evolved into hybrid devices with powerful media capabilities. They have become socially acceptable indispensable lifestyle instruments. They are interruptive and hold their owners' hostage to their every beep, vibration, or other permutation to gain attention. Debatably, the demands mobile phones place on their owners has contributed to a fragmented lifestyle. People are contactable 24/7, and aided by their mobile phones have the flexibility to interact with media anytime and anyplace. The omnipresence of mobile phones perhaps brings fresh meaning to Jameson's (1985:119) prediction of "perpetual present", which initially referred to a world characterised by an incessant concentration of passing media. In the media fragmentation debate, the author's view is that arguably an anticipated rise in the use of personal digitised media may yield a corresponding decline in mass communication.

Overcoming issues of micro-segmentation and communication clutter with digital media

In the context of marketing communication the two main areas of opportunity conceptualised from the preceding account on fragmentation are micro-segmentation and communication clutter. Table 2.4 considers possible marketing communication tactics to address these issues through the use of mobile and social media platforms.

Table 2.4: Possible tactics to address fragmentation through mobile and social media in marketing communication

| OPPORTUNITY | MARKETING COMMUNICATION TACTIC | MOBILE MEDIA | SOCIAL MEDIA |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| Micro-segmentation | • Develop tailored communication to different interest groups or personalised communication to individuals. | ✓ | ✓ |
| | • Establish relationships with customer. | ✓ | ✓ |
| | • Attempt to leverage network linkages between participants within social groups. | partly | ✓ |
| | • Build customer profiles. | ✓ | ✓ |
| Communication clutter | • Develop stand out communication (e.g. use multi-media or offer vouchers.) | ✓ | ✓ |
| | • Provide customers with value (e.g. branded or non-branded content or useful related information.) | ✓ | ✓ |
| | • Stimulate word-of-mouth to inspire customers to forward communication virally to other people. In this way the other recipients may be more receptive to the communication because it has been supplied to them from a known source. (Attempt to deliver marketing communication through customer-to-customer exchanges). | ✓ | ✓ |

2.5.2 De-differentiation

“De-differentiation involves the erosion, effacement and elision of established hierarchies – high and low culture, education and training, politics and show business – and the blurring of what were formerly clear-cut entities” (Brown, 1995:107).

De-differentiation: Defining attributes

De-differentiation is closely related to fragmentation, where fragmentation concerns disintegration and re-synthesis, de-differentiation is the blurring of boundaries between fragments (Berthon & Katsikeas, 1998; Brown, 1995:106; Firat & Dholakia, 2006:131). The implosion of boundaries encountered through de-differentiation encompasses both intra-domains and inter-domains. This diffusion of domain boundaries is likely to contribute to the acceptance of cultural diversity. The lack of distinction created through de-differentiation further displaces established beliefs between relationships of object and subject (Firat & Dholakia, 2006:131), which is a key aspect of de-differentiation.

De-differentiation: Marketing context

The distinction between consumers and marketers is changing as consumers become more involved in shaping their lives (Firat & Dholakia, 2006:137), this could be likened to displacements of subject and object. Firat and Dholakia (2006:136) consider the concept of *partner-players*, where together consumers and marketers build needs, desires, ideas for and of life and meaning. Firat and Dholakia (2006:140) contend that the postmodern consumer is a *post-consumer*. Post-consumers are “less concerned about the material values and more interested in the experience value of activities” (Firat & Dholakia 2006:140).

Customer partnerships and collaboration

Today, perhaps less emphasis is placed on material or functional values because there is an abundance of goods within each product category offering relative performance parity. The concepts of partner-players and post-consumer agree with Grönroos' (2005:2-3) advocacy of value-in-use and relationship marketing.

Relationship marketing characterised by multi-directional flow of communication between marketers and consumers (Grönroos, 2005:2-3), further blurs distinctions between marketers and consumers, where the roles of receivers and senders are interchangeable in these interactions (interchanging roles between subject and object). Post consumers in effect become extensions of the marketing organisation within their communities (Firat & Dholakia 2006:155); this could have negative as well as positive implications, depending on consumer reactions. Aspects of consumers interacting with brand assets is evident in fan fiction, where Jenkins (2006:557) reveals that film fans pay tribute to favourite movies, scenes, directors and producers by re-creating aspects of films with fans applying their perspectives to favourite segments. These multi-media interpretations sometimes take extensive liberties with characters, changing scenarios, introducing other characters, providing new sound tracks, making scenes more contemporary, and even including themselves in their homage. Jenkins (2006:554) holds new media responsible for spawning this participatory culture, which is palpable in the entertainment genre, where fans interact, create, transform, adapt and re-circulate content. This interactivity is however at odds with the media and brand conglomerates in terms of protection of their original content, brand assets and intellectual property rights. Concern over consumers' use of brand assets is not isolated to the film industry; it is an anxiety shared by most brand custodians. There is good reason for this concern as the brand is one of the few remaining aspects of marketing that marketers still have control over and provides a source of competitive advantage (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010:248). Jenkins (2006:558) appeals to marketers to relinquish control over intellectual property to release these assets to the public; postulating that icons and characters will increase in value as the public are allowed to interact and play with them (another manifestation of the value-in-use concept). Some marketers have taken note of Jenkins' logic, as evident through the creation of competitions for consumers to produce commercials, with the winning advert going into formal production and commercial flighting, which means that the advertisement is formally placed by the advertiser in the medium it was designed for. Technological developments in digital media have made it more affordable for people to a) generate media content and b) produce content that rivals professional productions (Jenkins, 2006:552).

Continuing with an advertising theme, Brown (1995:112) raises the point that boundary blurring occurs between advertising and editorial content too in, for example, infomercials, advertorials, radiotorials, netorials, testimonials, edutainment, infotainment, and user generated content in comparison to scripted material. For the uninitiated, these formats make it difficult to distinguish the difference between advertising and editorial communication. Brown (1995:110) also observes mixing of high culture and low culture in advertising; for example, the use of classical music scores to provide the sound track to cigar commercials. This example also highlights the juxtaposition or pastiche aspect of postmodernism, which is the mixing of seemingly unrelated genres.

De-differentiation is apparent in consumers' consumption of media, with younger consumers seamlessly interacting with non-computer mediated media as well as computer-mediated media (Odom, Zimmerman & Forlizzi, 2011:1497; Samuels, 2008:220). This behaviour hints at the fact that marketers should consider deploying media neutral campaigns. A media neutral campaign encompasses all forms of brand communication and allows the communication to traverse across multiple touchpoints (Hackley, 2010:138).

The Internet is a master de-differentiator. It dissolves multiple boundaries, such as geography, gender, time, age, commercial and private lives, and fact and fiction (Berthon & Katsikeas, 1998). These properties apply to the mobile Internet too, perhaps more so. Computer-mediated media's interactive properties are unlike any other medium; for example their capacity for virtual community development, which helps to build and maintain permanent or temporary (such as cause related) relationships (Jenkins, 2006:556; Poster, 2006:541). The potential for exponential reach is yet another prospect of computer-mediated communication. Where non-computer mediated media was dominated by large conglomerates serving the masses; computer-mediated media, like the Internet, offers media power to the individual. It also affords individuals the possibility of reaching more people than would be possible using non-computer mediated media.

De-differentiation relates to the idea of reversed production and consumption, which is the notion that consumption has surpassed production, in the cultural context of defining

oneself (Firat *et al.*, 1995:42). Individuals produce meaning through the act of consumption. However, Procter and Kitchen (2002:148) consider that the symbols people produce through consumption are continuously changing, which recognises customers' shifting wants and needs. People are dynamic. A postmodern culture allows people to simultaneously occupy different roles depending on the circumstance they find themselves in (for example, a woman may be a mother, wife, sister, and/or corporate executive).

De-differentiation: Marketing communication applications through digital media

The concept of loss of distinction between objects and human subjects (Firat & Dholakia, 2006:137; Samuels, 2008:219) has interesting connotations regarding the relationship between mobile phones and their owners or users. The fragmentation discussion on mobile phones mentioned the disruptive effects of mobile phones on their users' activities. This begs the question of who is in control - does the mobile phone control its user or is the user in control over the mobile phone?

Mobile phones bring flexibility to communication. People are not confined to a particular place or time to communicate (talk, text, email, use an instant messenger (IM), access social networks, and other social media activities), transact, or browse the Internet, thus dissolving time and place (Székely & Nagy, 2011:2191). Unlike some forms of media, mobile media can be used in interstitial space, times and places which are not always suitable for other media use, such as commuting and queuing (Dimmick *et al.* 2010:2). People are highly accessible through their mobile phones (typically phones are no more than an arm's reach away), unlike other media, thus diffusing the boundary of accessibility. Furthermore, mobile phones are highly interactive devices, with their range of multi-media communication offerings, which presents them as a suitable media to exploit for customer relationship management. The diffusion of accessibility applies to the context of social media too by providing the means for people to communicate across time and geographic boundaries.

Leveraging opportunities from blurred boundaries and value creation with digital media

In the context of marketing communication the two main areas of opportunity conceptualised from the preceding account on de-differentiation are blurred boundaries and the creation of value. Table 2.5 considers possible marketing communication tactics to address these issues through the use of mobile and social media platforms.

Table 2.5: Possible tactics to address de-differentiation through mobile and social media in marketing communication

| OPPORTUNITY | MARKETING COMMUNICATION TACTICS | MOBILE MEDIA | SOCIAL MEDIA |
|--|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| Blurred boundaries and displacement between object and subject | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embrace the concept of multi-directional flow of communication between marketers and customers, who interchange between roles of sender and receiver. Emphasise relationship marketing through interactivity. | ✓ | ✓ |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketers should communicate with the customer at the customer's convenience, for example, when the customer reaches out to communicate. | ✓ | ✓ |
| Creating value | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create customer experiences by providing meaningful value to the customer. For example, through the provision of related content such as relevant applications. | ✓ | ✓ |

2.5.3 Hyperreality

“Hyperreality, as exemplified by the fantasy worlds of theme parks, virtual reality and computer games, involves the loss of a sense of authenticity and the becoming ‘real’ of what was originally a simulation” (Brown, 1995:107)

Hyperreality: Defining attributes

The previous discussion on de-differentiation centred on the blurring of boundaries. The hyperreal condition blurs distinctions between reality and fantasy (Brown, 2006:217; Firat & Dholakia, 2006:128). Baudrillard (2006:453) further describes the hyperreal as a form of reality that has been constructed on an imagined plan. The most popularly cited example of hyperreality is *Disneyland* for its integration of fantasy and reality (Baudrillard, 2006:462; Berthon & Katsikeas, 1998; Brown, 1995:129; Firat & Dholakia, 2006:128; Procter &

Kitchen, 2002:147). The virtual worlds of cyberspace are other examples of the hyperreal condition, relevant to today's society (Brown, 2006:216).

Hyperreality: Marketing context

The presence of hyperreality is unmistakable in media, particularly in advertising content and entertainment offerings. Consumers confront the hyperreality of advertising on a daily basis. They are bombarded with flawless product shots, models air-brushed to perfection, dream realities and propositions of apparently life changing remedies. Sometimes customers are challenged to draw meaning from ambiguous creative renditions designed to extol benefits for products or services (Brown, 1995:114; Firat & Dholakia, 2006:129; Procter & Kitchen, 2002:147), and some advertisements, it would seem, have little to do with the product they are actually advertising.

In entertainment media, soap operas and films revel in hyperreality, notably science fiction genres. Reality programming, like *Survivor* and *Big Brother*, could also be considered as hyperreal, in the sense that program participants are aware they are being watched so they may present alternative modes of behaviour, than they would otherwise exhibit away from the all seeing eyes of cameras and the public. Computer games are a clear manifestation of hyperreal. Gaming products range from stand alone portals to massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPG) like *World of Warcraft* (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009:563). MMORPGs of the scale of *World of Warcraft*, with over 8.5 million subscriptions (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009:564) are massive virtual social worlds. Virtual commerce within these worlds is starting to gather momentum; games have already accepted virtual advertising, for example, placing advertisements on billboards around racetracks featured in automobile racing games (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009:563). In terms of game players, their hyperreal motivations for playing games could include escapism from current realities, exploring fictitious alternatives. Poster (2006:543) postulates that virtual reality may imply multiple realities or a single reality taking different forms. This aspect is particularly interesting in identity development. For example, in virtual worlds participants can be whoever they want to be, which may influence participants' identity development in the physical world. For Generation Y gaming has been associated with control, adolescents generally experience limited control in their day-to-day lives, but when

it comes to their computer games they are in charge (Pitout, 2001:517; Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:52).

Virtual worlds are becoming more commonplace, with pertinent examples being online social network communities. The current popular ones are *Facebook* and *Twitter* with 750 million and 100 million active users respectively, as of September 2011 (*Facebook*, 2011; Taylor, 2011). Poster (2006:543) remarks that virtual and real communities are juxtapositioned, with virtual communities reinforcing real ones; perhaps there may come a time when this situation reverses with virtual communities superseding real communities in an increasingly digitally connected world. E-commerce is yet another aspect of hyperreality, some organisations, like *eBay* and *amazon* operate nearly exclusively on the Internet.

Returning to the physical world, other hyperreal marketing acts include the building of brand personalities and values around inanimate items. This also applies to borrowing celebrities to reinforce a brand's personality. The author is of the opinion that in many cases it could be argued that celebrities are, in themselves, constructed brands which have been built following a similar premise of construction.

In examining media and hyperreality, Baudrillard's (2006:453) description of the hyperreal as a form of reality that has been constructed on an imagined plan is considered. Taking this definition literally implies that all forms of electronic media are hyperreal, because they are invented forms of reality. Contemplating Baudrillard's (2006:460) simulacra concept, that simulacra are copies of a copy for which there is no original, one could argue that computer-mediated media are simulacra of non-computer mediated media, considering their multi-media properties and capacity for convergence to replicate content of non-computer mediated media. The Internet for example, includes the capacity for people to read newspapers, watch films, listen to radio, amongst other activities. Whereas non-computer mediated media has limited interactive abilities; computer-mediated media allows audiences to interact with the media, for instance, posting points of view about the content they have consumed. Baudrillard (2006:473) appears to challenge the transparency of McLuhan's (2006:207) notion of "the media is the message" on the

grounds of the complexity that new media or new genres of media have introduced, which infers a degree of blending between the medium and the message, so that they are not entirely indistinguishable from one another. Baudrillard's (2006:473) perspective is that the media serve as filters of the real and as such transform the real into the hyperreal.

Hyperreality overload seems to trigger a reversal, at least in advertising and marketing sectors, to a longing for authenticity (Brown, 1995:116). However, in the same way that brand personalities are manufactured, authenticity is just as easily created artificially in advertising and marketing, which paradoxically is hyperreal too.

Hyperreality: Marketing communication applications through digital media

The advent of the mobile Internet, which offers all the functionality of the Internet, means that much of the previous discussion concerning hyperreality aspects of the Internet is relevant to mobile media, particularly the virtual services offered through online social media.

Leveraging opportunities of virtual environments and authenticity with digital media

In the context of marketing communication the two main areas of opportunity conceptualised from the preceding account on hyperreality are virtual environments and authenticity. Table 2.6 considers possible marketing communication tactics to address these issues through the use of mobile and social media platforms.

Table 2.6: Possible tactics to address hyperreality through mobile and social media in marketing communication

| OPPORTUNITY | MARKETING COMMUNICATION TACTICS | MOBILE MEDIA | SOCIAL MEDIA |
|---------------------|--|---|---------------------|
| Virtual environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use social networks as alternative environments to communicate with customers. | Offers a point of access to virtual platforms | ✓ |
| Authenticity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drive authenticity by stimulating customers to converse or share their personal brand experiences with other people. | ✓ | ✓ |

2.5.4 Chronology

“Chronology comprises the archetypal postmodern concern for the past (or representations of the past) and the abandonment, in an era when time and space are being increasingly compressed, of the progressive, forward-looking orientation of modernism for an essentially retrospective, backward-looking perspective” (Brown, 1995:107).

Chronology: Defining attributes

In applying the perspective of chronology to time, Brown’s (1995:107) view of postmodernism as a penchant for the past is at odds with Firat and Dholakia (2006:127), who see postmodernism as firmly in the present through the “folding-in of the past and future into the burgeoning here-and-now present”. Berthon and Katsikeas (1998) follow a similar logic to Firat and Dholakia, referring to chronology in the context of cyberspace and the issue of space-time compression. Berthon and Katsikeas (1998) conclude that the perceived capability of cyberspace to collapse time, past, present and future (an act of de-differentiation) has the effect of a short-lived now. This author disagrees with their conclusion and their interpretation of the term “short-lived now”, suggesting that rather than shortening time, cyberspace (the Internet) has extended time through speed, bringing efficiency, convenience and providing longevity, because content has the potential to live indefinitely in cyberspace. The Internet means not having to wait, instant access, and sometimes real-time delivery (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010:427). Consider for example the time-saving that online banking transactions bring consumers in comparison to the time taken to physically go to a bank, complete the necessary paperwork and then wait in a teller queue to finalise the process.

According to Harvey (1992) a consequence of a less significant future and past is a more ephemeral present. This point resonates with Generation Y who experience life in the here and now. It is reasonable to think that if this generation has skipped levels of Maslow’s hierarchy as postulated in Chapter 5, this group in effect has a less significant past, because they personally have not had to contribute to the lower foundational levels of their own hierarchy of needs.

Chronology: Marketing context

Technology has led to the world functioning at a faster pace, but it has also provided the tools to equip people to navigate and manage these changes, and in this adjustment consumers have become accustomed to speed. There is evidence that consumers have enhanced the rate of their information processing abilities (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:9). The fact that younger generations assimilate data faster than preceding ones has possibly led to the conception that they suffer from shorter attention spans; perhaps this is a misconception and rather younger generations simply require less time to process information, so they may appear to have shorter attention spans. Manifestations of this behavioural change could be related to people channel hopping through television stations, scanning radio stations, and possibly the creation of shorter duration commercials to cater to these viewers (although reduced cost of both production and media time are other rational conclusions for airing shorter commercials). To a degree these illustrations could be likened to the fragmentation trait.

A further point to note is that multi-tasking behavioural habits imply that multiple situations are occurring simultaneously as opposed to chronologically, although each event would run its own chronological course.

Brown (1995:116) reflects that advertising references to the past are in part a consequence of hyperreality turning on itself and stimulating a demand for realness. In advertising this demand for realness comprises of a return to hard sell advertising:

- A drive for brand authenticity (which is noted in Chapter 5 as a requisite for Generation Y consumers).
- Reinforcement of long established brands' lineages suggesting trust and reliability through longevity, which has been found to appeal to older generations more than younger ones.
- The use of retro and revival of the past evoking nostalgia, for example, in the car market with launches of the new Mini, new Beetle and new Fiat 500.

- The resuscitation of dying brands, another reference to the past, for example, Old Spice, which has recently reinvented itself in the “Smell like man, man” campaign (Norton, 2010:1).

Chronology: Marketing communication applications through digital media

In relation to chronology, the capabilities of mobile media, particularly the mobile Internet, challenge issues of space and time.

Altered perceptions of time and space

It is conceivable that, by using mobile and social media for marketing communication, there will be less emphasis on time and space. Mobile media and social media (accessed through mobile platforms) can be used anytime and anyplace, allowing both real-time as well as delayed communications. For instance communications can be saved and referred to as required and brand orientated or brand issued applications can be retrieved when needed.

However the deployment of marketing communication campaigns should be sensitive to consumer receptivity of communications. A case in point concerns marketers that despatch mobile SMS campaigns just before dawn, who may consider they are benefiting their company financially by taking advantage of cheaper data tariffs during this period; but they are possibly alienating a customer or potential customer if they disrupt his or her sleep, which arguably would have greater financial consequences on the company’s financial health.

Leveraging opportunities of real-time communication and rapid processing capabilities with digital media

In the context of marketing communication the two main areas of opportunity conceptualised from the preceding account on chronology are considered to be real-time communication and faster processing abilities of people. Table 2.7 considers possible marketing communication tactics to address these issues through the use of mobile and social media platforms.

Table 2.7: Possible tactics to address chronology through mobile and social media in marketing communication

| OPPORTUNITY | MARKETING COMMUNICATION TACTICS | MOBILE MEDIA | SOCIAL MEDIA |
|-----------------------------|--|---------------------|---------------------|
| Real time communication | • Sense and respond to customer needs or take advantage of current topical situations to communicate real time relevant information. | ✓ | ✓ |
| | • Overcome boundary issues of time and place. | ✓ | ✓ |
| Faster abilities to process | • Use short communication rendered to the suitability of the media platform selected for use. | ✓ | ✓ |

2.5.5 Pastiche

“Pastiche consists of playful, tongue-in-cheek collage or medley of available styles, an ironic, self-referential mixing of existing codes, be they architectural, artistic, cinematic, literary, musical or whatever” (Brown, 1995:107).

Pastiche: Defining attributes

The characteristic of pastiche refers to the creative liberties of postmodernism; possibilities for collages of various styles across different domains (O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2002:116; Samuels, 2008:221). In reference to societal diversity, Jameson (2006:493) refers to pastiche to describe general society's heterogeneous arrangement that does not conform to a universal standard. Firat and Dholakia (2006:121) include pastiche as a sub-attribute of fragmentation that they refer to as *bricolage*.

Pastiche: Marketing context

In the advertising sphere, pastiche is evident in advertisements that parody other advertisements or aspects of pop culture or current affair topics in their content or copy-lines (Brown, 1995:120). The extensive capabilities of multi-media and various software applications afford both professionals and consumers flexibility in their creative use of media.

Pastiche: Marketing communication applications through digital media

Pastiche also relates to consumers mashing media content into self-created compositions. In the social media space, individuals' social pages are typically self-referential, from specific preferences documented directly on their profile pages, to their profile pictures or representative avatars, to the content they post, to the skins they select and other embellishments, to their friends (including corporate friends, like brands), to the applications and games they have downloaded. These personalised pages are organic testaments of self-expression. As mentioned previously, the similarities between the Internet and the mobile Internet implies that whatever activities can be performed on the Internet can also be done via the mobile Internet (including social media activities). A relevant illustration of mixing of styles and self-expression is apparent in the evolution of *txt spk*. This refers to a

short-hand language, typically used in SMS or messenger applications, with virtually no grammar or punctuation, which is characterised by phonetics, the abbreviation of words through the omission of letters, substituting numbers and addition of emoticons. It is surmised that *txt spk* arose out of a) the fact that a single SMS was restricted to 160 characters and b) the cost of sending SMS. So, to reduce costs, the sender’s objective was to squeeze as much information as possible into a single SMS in a self-styled way. The practice of SMS language has also made its way into instant messaging platforms, like Mxit and BlackBerry messenger. Although these offerings are significantly cheaper than SMS and have fewer character restrictions, *txt spk* still persists possibly as a result of habit and individual expression.

Leveraging opportunities of personalisation and shared creativity with digital media

In the context of marketing communication the two main areas of opportunity conceptualised from the preceding account on pastiche are personalisation and sharing creativity. Table 2.8 considers possible marketing communication tactics to address these issues through the use of mobile and social media platforms.

Table 2.8: Possible tactics to address pastiche through mobile and social media in marketing communication

| OPPORTUNITY | MARKETING COMMUNICATION TACTIC | MOBILE MEDIA | SOCIAL MEDIA |
|-----------------|---|--------------|--------------|
| Personalisation | • Offer customers brand assets that they can play with to generate customised creations that provide them with value. | ✓ | ✓ |
| | • Provide customers with access to brand images, related content, music, logos. | ✓ | ✓ |
| Creativity | • Host competitions for users to submit the creative work for potential public consumption. | ✓ | ✓ |

2.5.6 Anti-foundationalism

“Anti-foundationalism is postmodernism’s characteristically deconstructive urge, its antipathy towards orthodoxy, complacency, the establishment and, not least, systematic generalisations, most notably the totalising Metanarratives of science, socialism, humanism, etc., which form part of the modern movement’s discredited search for universal truths and objective knowledge” (Brown, 1995:107).

Anti-foundationalism: Defining attributes

Berthon and Katsikeas (1998) agree in principle with Brown's view of anti-foundationalism in postmodernism. However they expand further on the deconstruction aspect of anti-foundationalism, inferring that in the process of deconstruction, there is loss of meaning, to the extent that when the process has concluded, the divided components bear minimal resemblance to the original artefact, which coincidentally relates back to the fragmentation trait. Berthon's and Katsikeas's (1998) perspective of deconstruction is that it leaves little evidence of the initial construction. This author holds a contrary opinion, namely that deconstruction does not equate to destruction. Deconstruction is a process which unravels knowledge of what the construction is, how it came to be formed and how its constituents are related to each other. The knowledge of the process and relationships between parts provide guidance in the reconstruction of alternative assemblies.

Anti-foundationalism: Marketing context

In the context of advertising, anti-foundationalism is about going against conventional wisdom (Brown, 1995:126). A relevant example is the 2002 launch of Mini in America. Instead of deploying a big budget mass media campaign, typical of new vehicle launches at the time, Mini's marketers chose to run a non-conventional campaign opting for innovative guerrilla marketing. They used a combination of creative print in magazines and placed Minis in unusual locations. Locations included the likes of Minis in the seating of stadiums, as if they were spectators watching games; and "Mini rides", mimicking children's coin operated rides, were set up inside shopping centres (Kotler & Armstrong, 2006:424). Mini also featured prominently in the form of product placement in the remake of the movie the *Italian Job*, which is a non-conventional application of media by promoting a brand through content creation (Hackley, 2010:169). The 2008 United States of America presidential election of President Obama is another successful example of unconventional use of media, which highlighted the significance of social media. Perceivably a common thread to these campaigns is the creation of relevant brand experiences that customers or voters could identify with.

New media shifts conventional processes

It could be argued that the advent of any new media is anti-foundational, because it introduces as yet an unconventional platform. Computer-mediated media has greater implications than just substituting for traditional media. Its interactive properties have shifted the power continuum away from media conglomerates towards consumers, who now have the possibility to share their own content, with a broader public.

Brown (1995:128) cites green-marketing as anti-foundationalism with its anti-waste and anti-consumption biases that heavily conflicts with today's consumption society, which is marred by lack of sustainability. Bearing this green thinking in mind, computer-mediated media is less wasteful than printed media like magazines, newspaper and out of home posters; and furthermore computer-mediated media can be conveniently stored electronically and remains accessible. However, a non-green aspect concerns the disposal of the hardware consumers use to access computer-mediated media, when the consumer decides to discard this equipment. The rapid development in technology means that devices obsolesce at similarly rapid rates, so one would expect high disposal rates of the defunct equipment, which has negative consequences on the environment.

According to Berthon and Katsikeas (1998) the Internet epitomizes anti-foundationalism in several ways. Firstly, it is decentred, there is no controlling authority. Secondly, it is an unstable medium that is continuously evolving: Web to Web 2.0, which transitions audiences from passive receivers to participatory users (O'Reilly, 2005); Web 2.0 to Web 3.0; Web 3.0 to Web 4.0, and so on; O'Reilly and Battelle (2009) use the metaphor of the child growing up as both the reason and process for these transformations. Thirdly, the Internet's capacity to allow for multi-directional flow of communications. These properties of the Internet mimic those of *complex systems*.

Anti-foundationalism: Marketing communication applications through digital media

The same aspects of anti-foundationalism that apply to the Internet are relevant to the mobile Internet. A further element of anti-foundationalism for mobile media is for advertisers not to use the medium as a substitute for other media but to leverage its unique properties and utilise mobile media and its various applications in unconventional ways.

Leveraging opportunities through unconventionality and customer networks with digital media

In the context of marketing communication the two main areas of opportunity conceptualised from the preceding account on anti-foundationalism are unconventionality and tapping into customer's networks of complex systems. Table 2.9 considers possible marketing communication tactics to address these issues through the use of mobile and social media platforms.

Table 2.9: Possible tactics to address anti-foundationalism through mobile and social media in marketing communication

| OPPORTUNITY | MARKETING COMMUNICATION TACTIC | MOBILE MEDIA | SOCIAL MEDIA |
|--------------------|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| Unconventionality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage the unique properties of the platforms for innovation. | ✓ | ✓ |
| Complex systems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> People belong to numerous networks. Stimulate communication within these networks that can be promulgated by members to their other networks. | ✓ | ✓ |

2.5.7 Pluralism

Brown (1995:107) does not consider pluralism as a separate characteristic of postmodernism but rather an overarching condition of the postmodern paradigm, in that postmodernism consists of a unorganised arrangement of any one or more of the aforementioned multiple characteristics. This perspective is mirrored by Firat and Dholakia (2006:130) who use the term *difference* analogously. Postmodernism tolerates diversity and acceptance of the various relationships between diverse variables. According to O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy (2002:119) pluralism acknowledges that humans have many objectives, and there is no one universal truth.

Likewise with reference to marketing communication and the use of mobile and social media, neither exists in isolation of other factors and other communication platforms.

2.6 FURTHER TRANSFORMATIONS FROM MODERN TO POSTMODERN MARKETING

Collaboration appears to be a significant difference between postmodern and modern orientations of marketing. It is important to note that this does not mean customers are about to take over the professional role of marketing, but rather participate in the process of marketing (Cova & Dallı, 2009:316), which has been made possible through the tools of today's technology. An analogy would be that just because most people have some degree of culinary skill does not necessarily mean they are going to become professional chefs.

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)*. This transition immerses the practice of marketing into customer communities, providing a supportive role in communities to enhance their life experiences.
- *From managed to collaborative marketing (2006:150)*. This shift recognises customers as co-performers in the marketing process.
- *From centralised to diffused marketing (2006:151)*. This change infers that all stakeholders are involved in marketing. It is no longer the exclusive domain of an organisation's dedicated marketing division.
- *From ordered to complex marketing (2006:151)*. This transition refers to a need for enterprises to adopt more flexible marketing practices in a versatile market.

These four transitions cumulatively build upon each other. In many ways the prevalence of social networks and or other post-consumer communities appear to welcome these transitions, which it is anticipated will further progress the concepts into the future. However the literature has been found lacking postulates that are capable of implementing these transitions, without requiring radical transformation within organisations. Firat and Dholakia (2006:148) consider *embedded marketing*, as a concept, "where the firm is part of the community to facilitate the efforts of consumer communities to mutually construct their desires and the products". This marketing concept embraces postmodern traits and serves as an appropriate tool for consumer communities to collectively, with marketers

fulfil their needs in postmodern society. It is important to note that the concept of embedded marketing in the context of this study does not refer to the idea of product placement which is also referred to as embedded marketing in the literature. Table 2.10 summarises philosophical shifts between modern and postmodern orientations in marketing as well as the implications of these shifts to marketing.

Table 2.10: Modern and postmodern orientations in marketing

| | MODERN ORIENTATION | POSTMODERN ORIENTATION |
|----------------------|---|--|
| REALITY/TRUTH | Philosophical shifts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is reality/truth 'out there', independent of human agency. • Structures are given and can only be changed through 'laws' inherent in these structures. • Reality/truth is fundamental. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reality/truth 'out there' has been constructed through cultural processes of hype, simulation, imaginary. • Structures are constructed and they transform with changes in culturally constructed conventions and perspectives. • Reality truth is contingent. |
| | Marketing implications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nature of human needs is given. • Marketing must/should serve given needs. • Marketing satisfies needs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human needs are constructed (informed by current notions of biology). • Marketing is part of the process of constructing needs. • Marketing enables construction of life meanings. |
| BEING HUMAN | Philosophical shifts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The human being is the 'knowing subject', central and acting upon all others, enabled by science. • The subject and object are distinct and separable. • The subject controls and acts upon the object • The individual and the social are distinct and separable. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The subject-hood of the human being is ambiguous. • The subject and object are often indistinguishable and exchangeable. • The subject and object act upon each other. • The individual and social are overlapping and inseparable. |
| | Marketing implications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing provides objects that will satisfy the needs of the 'knowing subject'. • Marketing serves the subject. • Marketing is a business practice. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing partners with the human being to co-construct the 'complex of desire'. • Marketing is an enabler of communities of human beings in constructing life experiences. • Marketing is a moment in the cultural process of constructing meaning and substance in life. |

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| CONSUMPTION/CONSUMER MARKETING | <p>Philosophical shifts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumption is the opposite of production; it is depletion of value created in production. • Consumption is a process of replenishing energies to be used in 'productive' tasks. • Consumption is the end. • Consumption is an economic necessity. <p>Marketing implications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumer marketing is provision of products for 'end use'. • Consumer marketing enables the appropriation and use of values created in productive activities. • Consumer marketing is a process of enabling consumption. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumption is a moment in the continuous cycle of production. • Consumption is production of identity, image, meaning, value, and experiences. • Consumption is a means for creation of meaning and substance in life. • Consumption is purposeful action. |
| CONSUMER | <p>Philosophical shifts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose of the consumer is to replenish energies and amass material possessions. • The consumer is a chooser among alternatives that are available in the market. • Consumers express themselves through their consumption. • The consumer is a 'customer'. <p>Marketing implications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing discovers customers needs and provides alternative products to satisfy these needs. • Marketing is an activity to satisfy consumer needs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose of the post-consumer/performer is to produce life experiences and meanings. • The post-consumer /performer is a constructor of alternatives. • The post-consumers/performers produce their identities in the process. • The post-consumer/performer is a 'marketer'. |
| ORGANISATION | <p>Philosophical shifts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation has boundaries that distinguish it from its customers. • Organisation is an entity distinct from 'others'. • Organisation exists to provide for society's needs. <p>Marketing implications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing is a process of researching and satisfying consumer needs. • Marketing enables organisations to communicate with and provide for consumers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation and post-consumers/performers relate without boundaries. • Organisation is a network of relationships indistinct from 'others'. • Organisation is a network of/for society's desires. <p>Marketing implications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing is a process of constructing networks that enable human beings to create and navigate meaningful experiences. • Marketing enables human beings to construct communication and provision networks. |



MARKETING COMMUNICATION

Philosophical shifts:

- Communication is informational or entertaining and persuasive.
- Communication is a composed set of signs to be transmitted to others.
- The author (encoder) determines the meaning of the message.
- Communication is an act separable from other acts.
- Communication is transformational and constructive.
- Communication is a process of co-producing symbolic meanings.
- The author (encoder) and the receiver (decoder) of the message co-construct its meaning.
- Communication is inseparable from other acts; all acts communicate.

Marketing implications:

- Marketing communicates to inform the market about products that the market needs.
- Marketing communication shapes its message to correspond to the market's characteristics.
- Marketing communication is a separate but coordinated element of the marketing campaign.
- Marketing communication is part of the cultural process that constructs desires that necessitate the products.
- Marketing communication takes part in the constitution of the characteristics of extant and emergent cultures in the market.
- Marketing communication is an inherent and inseparable part of all acts in human society.

Source: Firat and Dholakia (2006:154,155)

2.7 DEFENDING POSTMODERNISM

Postmodernism's death has been heralded for as long as it has existed (Brown, 1995; Hassan, 2003; Vermeulen & Van den Akker, 2010). The debate of what comes after postmodernism still continues. *Digimodernism* (previously referred to as pseudomodernism), as conceived by Kirby (2009) is a cultural paradigm concerning the effects of new technologies on culture. Interestingly Kirby's (2009) motivation for digimodernism to surpass postmodernism is tinged with the déjà vu of the arguments that espoused postmodernism from its predecessor modernism.

According to Kirby (2009) digimodernism succeeds postmodernism on the basis of a) it has become the dominant cultural movement of current times through the computerisation of text; b) for a period digimodernism co-existed with postmodernism; c) digimodernism intends to purge the less appealing characteristics of postmodernism; d) digimodernism is a consequence of postmodern traits; and e) the characteristics of digimodernism follow a logical progression from postmodernism. Digimodernism as yet lacks academic backing to substantiate Kirby's (2009) claims that it is a new cultural paradigm.

Metamodernism as proposed by Vermeulen and Van den Akker (2010) appears to be something between modernism and postmodernism, they describe it as a state, “between a typically modern commitment and a markedly postmodern detachment”, which seems to be more of a transitory explanation rather than a conclusive alternative. Samuels (2008) introduces the concept of *automodernity*, which fuses automation of technology with the autonomous user. This is thought provoking notion, which gives the impression of being more of a behavioural concept than an overtly cultural initiative.

The cultural phenomena cited above are by no means an exhaustive list of potential successors to postmodernism, but the fact that scholars are seeking alternative explanations is indicative of forward thinking and progress, particularly with technological advances affecting culture and society. Perhaps, rather than cultural theorists abandoning postmodernism in pursuit of entirely new movements there needs to be a reassessment of postmodernism with respect to the current era.

2.8 CONCLUSION

In reference to the opening line of this chapter, “These days anything goes?”, it is anticipated that this chapter has shown that postmodernism is not an irreverent confused juxtaposition, not just anything goes. Postmodernism is an eclectic movement that consents questioning of established norms and if needs be deconstructs and then suitably reconstructs, thus contributing to continuous diversity, in an appreciation of multiplicity. Arguably the flexibility of such a movement is a necessity in an ever changing world. Societies in the world have cultural norms and values, but they are not necessarily universal constructs (Samuels, 2008:220).

The preceding account of postmodernism has demonstrated this movement’s adaptability and openness to transformation, and the fact that postmodernism still has the capability to power explanations behind current cultural changes reasonably suggests it is still valid as a worldview.

Postmodernism breaks with the modern tradition of a single best approach. Postmodern marketing and/or marketing communication is about being unconventional to cater for an unpredictable market, through means that make marketing matter to customers. Specific tenets of postmodernism were applied to illustrate its influence and relevance to marketing and/or marketing communication.

The following chapter addresses marketing and/or marketing communication practices and considers implementation opportunities for marketing under postmodern conditions.