CHAPTER 9
Discussions, conclusions and recommendations

9.1   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss and integrate the research findings from the literature and the empirical research in relation to the specific objectives, as stipulated in Chapter 1 and reiterated below. Managerial implications are derived from these findings with reference to the use of digital media as marketing platforms in a postmodern society. Thereafter a conceptual framework, that considers pertinent postmodern marketing transitions, is formulated for managerial consideration. The limitations of this study are noted and suggestions for further research are offered.

9.2   THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study was to reflect on the suitability of current marketing and/or marketing communication theories from the perspective of a postmodern society with particular reference to digital media. A secondary purpose of the study was to examine the effects of postmodern characteristics on Generation Y's behaviour and attitudes towards digital media in relation to marketing communication activities.

9.3   IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Culture is simultaneously created by and directs human behaviour, attitudes, expressions and interactions within societies. Therefore the dominant culture of a particular period has a significant impact on events within that time. This study intended to demonstrate the importance of adjusting current knowledge or generating new knowledge within a discipline in accordance with the dominant culture of the prevailing period. This research specifically addressed the marketing discipline in reference to the postmodern cultural movement. The aim of the study was to contribute to the theoretical body of knowledge by reflecting on the validity of applying modern marketing and/or marketing communication theories in postmodern conditions and to empirically investigate whether Generation Y

demonstrates postmodern characteristics in their behaviour and attitudes towards the use of digital media in marketing and/or marketing communication efforts. Furthermore, in a postmodern context marketers need to readdress current practice. The study suggests implications for marketing practitioners by providing new insights of the behaviour and attitudes of a group of Generation Y consumers towards digital media to increase the understanding of this segment, and therefore take advantage of this information in the context of digital communication efforts that are directed at this segment.

9.4   DISCUSSION OF RESULTS IN RELATION TO SPECIFIC STATED OBJECTIVES

Each of the specific research objectives articulated in Chapter 1 will now be discussed in association with the empirical results and findings from the literature. For ease of navigation content will be arranged under relevant sub-headings, which will be introduced in the opening paragraph pertaining to each objective.

9.4.1 Objective 1:

To review the literature to interpret and reflect on the key characteristics of postmodern society in the context of marketing and or marketing communication and how people respond to digital media in postmodern conditions.

The discussions for the first objective are arranged under the following sub-headings: postmodern worldview; postmodern characteristics; the postmodern market; postmodern consumers; postmodern marketing: embedded marketing; and marketing and/or marketing communication development.

Postmodern worldview

One of the main goals of this objective was to contextualise the study. To address this objective, firstly the importance of a worldview as a governing influence on societal and cultural outputs was highlighted; thereafter postmodernism was argued as a dominant worldview for contemporary society with specific reference to postmodernism's affects as a

cultural movement in today's disruptive environment (Brown, 1994:28; Firat & Dholakia, 2006:123; Jameson, 2006:484; Poster, 2006:533; Samuels, 2008:221). Postmodernism recognises that societies are dynamic, and adapt to their environments (Brown 1994:28; Littlejohn & Foss, 2005:324; McQuail, 2010:129). Postmodernism evolved from modernism, which amongst other shortfalls has been faulted for being unsustainable (Brown 1995:69). Lack of sustainability is likely to stem from the tendency for modernism to decree one best option, which renders the movement inflexible in the face of change. In circumstances where variables are altered, options need to be reassessed to deal with the changed situation. Chaos and complexity theories, as theories of postmodernism, recognise the necessity to manage adjustments in response to changing circumstances. Technology has been credited for driving change and progressing modernism to postmodernism (Brown, 1995:69; Firat & Dholakia, 2006:123; Kumar, 2005:7).

It was further noted that culture is reflected in the media, and that the media disperses culture, thus the media propagates cultural movements (Dimmick *et al.*, 2010:2; McQuail, 2010:81). This point has significant implications for digital media concerning its capacity for interactivity and relatively low barriers to use, which allows almost anyone access to information as well as the possibility to generate content at low to no cost.

Culture is a broad phenomenon, therefore this study was delimited to the context of marketing and/or marketing communication, which are recognised as aspects of culture (Brown, 1995:107; Firat & Dholakia, 2006:124). Important cultural elements of postmodernism affecting marketing and/or marketing communication include:
- A society of incessant consumption (Brown, 2006:213);
- Acceptance of multiculturalism (Firat & Dholakia, 2006:126; Firat *et al.*, 1995:41; Samuels, 2008:221);
- Tolerance for differences, which does not jeopardise the ability to make specific choices (Firat & Dholakia, 2006:127; Samuels, 2008:221);
- The existence of relativism (O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2002:119);
- Living in the present (Firat & Dholakia, 2006:128); and

- Pastiche, which permits creative freedom to mix together expressions of seemingly unrelated content (Brown, 2006:213; O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2002:113; Samuels, 2008:222).

Postmodern characteristics

In addition, seven specific characteristics of postmodernism were identified from the literature: hyperreality, fragmentation, de-differentiation, pastiche, chronology, anti-foundationalism and pluralism (Brown, 1994; Brown, 1995). The application of these traits to marketing and/or marketing communication was reflected upon in discussions of the literature through quasi-propositions and investigated empirically as behavioural outcomes as indicated by respondents. The empirical findings suggested that de-differentiation, hyperreality, fragmentation and anti-foundationalism were the most important postmodern traits as interpreted through participants' responses. Potential implementation strategies that take advantage of these traits through digital media will be considered in Section 9.6, which proposes some managerial implications derived from the study.

The postmodern market

The literature revealed that in postmodern society the marketing and/or marketing communication environment has changed. For instance, marketers increasingly have less influence over the traditional 4P marketing mix (Procter & Kitchen, 2002:146), limiting their control to their brand and advertising activity. The market has become customer-centric, where the customer has greater influence over the market (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2005; Hackley, 2010; Kotler & Armstrong, 2006; Schultz & Shultz, 2004; Temporal, 2010). The advocacy of consumer centric marketing has received academic support in the form of the 8th foundational premise of Service-dominant logic, *a service-centred view is inherently customer oriented and relational* (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Consumers are exposed to an abundance of different offerings in the market (as a consequence of fragmentation), which gives them greater choice. Today's postmodern consumers are more informed and as a result make more discerning choices in the market (Procter & Kitchen, 2002:146).

Postmodern consumers

Postmodern consumers tend to be more active and express a willingness to contribute to marketing and/or marketing communication. Digital media has made it possible for consumers to contribute to market related content through the generation and sharing of content in social media (Correa *et al.*, 2010:247; Kaplan & Haenlin, 2010:61; Multisilta & Milrad, 2009; Zhao, 2011:87). Furthermore, consumers are conversing with one another about brands in their social media spaces (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010:42). These points have received support empirically by factors: *FD1: Hyperreal cult* (m=3.433); *FF3: Resourceful collaboration* (m=3.693); *FF4: Involved consumerism* (m=3.125); and *FD3: Interactive collaboration* (m=2.967). Kotler and Armstrong (2010:42) further note that brands should be participating in these consumer conversations.

The empirical study, as deduced by the mean score for factor, *FF1: Critical assertiveness* (m=3.923) indicates that consumers want brands to listen to them. Despite this medium rated score, factor, *FD3: Interactive collaboration* (m=2.967), which indicates the degree to which consumers interact with brands achieves a low score, which implies that direct interaction with brands is not a significant activity for the respondents in question. This low score also supports Schembri's (2006:387) notion that not all consumers want to contribute.

Postmodern marketing: embedded marketing

The consumer contributions arising from the empirical findings as noted in the previous section acknowledge the practice of *embedded marketing* (Firat & Dholakia, 2006:147-151), which recognises participatory activities amongst a brand's customers. Under the postmodern marketing and/or marketing communication banner customers are more participatory, which leads to: increased interaction between customers and brands; multi-directional flow of communication; less centralised communication efforts; and more complexity in marketing and/or marketing communication.

The findings provide evidence of changes in consumer behaviour towards brands, other consumers and marketers. They show that relationship dynamics between marketers and customers are changing, which supports the postmodern characteristic of fragmentation (Berthon & Katsikeas, 1998; Brown, 1995:106; Firat & Dholakia, 2006:131). In the marketing and/or marketing communication context consumers are becoming partner-players (Firat & Dholakia, 2006:136) in respect of their expectations and interactions with brands. The concept of partner-players is supported by the 6th foundational premise of Service-dominant logic, *the customer is always a co-creator of value* (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Furthermore, the complexity of exchanges between stakeholders is illustrated in the 9th foundational premise of Service-dominant logic, *all social and economic actors are resource integrators* (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). This demonstrates the applicability of Service-dominant logic as a tool to implement postmodern ideals.

Factors, *FB1: Personalisation* (m=3.513) and *FA3: Convenient interconnection* (m=4.102), highlight the connecting capabilities of digital media and the potential for value exchange, which contribute to relationship marketing, and the underlying concept of value-in-use (Grönroos, 2005:2-3). Value-in-use pertains to the value derived from using an offering which extends beyond the initial purchase to encompass the ongoing value the person experiences from the offering. A related concept is that of the 7th FP: *The enterprise cannot deliver value, but only offer value propositions* (Vargo & Lusch, 2008), which suggests that the perceived value of an offering is determined by the customer (Gummesson, 2008a:143; Vargo & Lusch 2004b:11). Grönroos (2005:2-3) argues that value-in-use contributes to long term relationships between brands and consumers. If one considers that it is less resource intensive to retain existing customers than to pursue new customers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2006:18) then the principle of value-in-use is an important concept to practitioners.

Marketing and/or marketing communication development

These discussions show how inroads have been made to generate new concepts in marketing and/or marketing communication to accommodate a postmodern society and digital media. However this progress is somewhat restrained through the persistence of unchanged models. Many marketing models in circulation today were devised before the

existence of digital media; consequently it is argued that these models are unlikely to accommodate the variables that new technology has introduced (McQuail, 2010:137,157; Schultz & Schultz, 2004:161; Wigston, 2001:5). Most traditional communication models are linear assuming customer decision-making is rational. The combination of digital media in conjunction with the characteristics of postmodern society requires that these traditional models be re-visited.

Based on these findings one could reason that contemporary society is characteristically postmodern and that society and culture influences all aspects of life; consequently postmodern consumers are different to modern consumers. The implication is that anything which is affected by cultural phenomena correspondingly has to adjust to the new worldview to remain viable. Thus, motivating the need to adapt marketing and/or marketing communication practices to be more representative of postmodern society. Service-dominant logic has been presented as a potential framework to implement postmodern marketing concepts.

9.4.2 Objective 2:

To evaluate Generation Y's perceptions and use of digital media (social media and mobile phones)

The discussions for the second objective are arranged under the following sub-headings: high usage of mobile phone and social media networks; cell phone usage: empirical findings; relativism; and digital media integration.

Generation Y defined as individuals born between 1978 and 2000 (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010:98; Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:xi) account for more than two-thirds of the South African population (Statistics South Africa, 2011:9). Generation Y is important from several perspectives, due to the sheer size of this group as well as the fact that this group represents the next wave of future consumers.

High usage of mobile phone and social media networks

All respondents in the empirical study possess a mobile phone and use social networks, this total saturation of the sample demonstrates the dependence and prevalence of digital media amongst youth (Stald, 2008:145). Uptake and use of digital media demonstrates the development of aptitude for digital technology (Székely & Nagy, 2011:2189; Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:97). Daily use of mobile phone functions and the nature of use are suggestive of the high degree to which mobile phone media are integrated into respondents' lives (Buckingham, 2008:15). Respondents' almost constant access to social media networks (89% log in daily and 55% log in five or more times a day) supports findings from Stald (2008:148), who similarly noted Generation Y's high propensity to use social and mobile phone media. This corroboration indicates that social media networks are used frequently to sustain respondents' social status. Furthermore, use of digital media in real-time supports the postmodern notion of here and now (Firat & Dholakia, 2006:128). The overall favourable mean scores achieved against the dependent variables of *FA3: Convenient interconnection*, m=4.102; *FD1: Hyperreal cult*, m=3.433 support the integral role of digital media in the lives of respondents; and recognises the seamless perception amongst respondents that fuses their physical offline worlds with their online worlds as noted by Buckingham (2008:14) and Ito (2008:vi).

Cell phone usage: empirical findings

The three features used most often by respondents are communication applications, namely: messaging, accessing social media and talking. The function used least is mapping. Cluster analysis of respondents' cell phone usage patterns revealed four distinct clusters, which can be summarised as follows:

- *Socialites* who characteristically make daily use of communication functions available on their cell phones. This cluster account for 28% of the overall group.
- *Conservatives* who tend to limit their use of cell phone features to talking and texting. This cluster account for 33% of the overall group.

- *Conversationalists* use a range of facilities on their cell phones and listen to or download music more than any other cluster in the group. Conversationalists make up 19% of the overall group.

- *Connoisseurs* are expert users of the range of functions available to them on their phones. They account for 20% of the overall group.

Interestingly, the composition of the clusters with respect to the property of interactivity indicates that interactivity is both a dimension of technology (Sundar, 2004) and a dimension of the abilities of users (Rafaeli, 1998; Heeter, 2004). The findings suggest that both dimensions are present. For instance, 62% of Conservatives own a smartphone but they do not interact with the full range of facilities offered by their devices, they tend to use basic functions of talking and texting. Thus this group is likely to be classified as having a low tendency for interactivity at a user level scale despite having access to an advanced tool with the capacity for high interactivity. The Connoisseurs on the other hand who account for the smallest percentage of smartphone ownership across the group 57% versus 69% in the entire group seem to be expert users of the functions available to them, and therefore they could be considered to demonstrate strong interactivity on a user level, but they are limited by the technology available to them.

Respondents indicated that participation in social media was an important behaviour. This dimension was subjected to further scrutiny to investigate the relationships between the sub-dimensions of social media and significant independent variables. The findings show that key predictor behaviours and attitudes associated with social media use are:

- High use and dependency of mobile phones;
- A need to be recognised as individuals;
- A need to keep updated with the latest trends;
- An affiliation for brands that demonstrate authenticity; and
- A need to participate either as content contributors or content users of social media.

Relativism

Relativism, another aspect of postmodernism (O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2002:110), is reflected through respondents' penchant for accessing preferred media content through their mobile phones, as demonstrated by the strength of *FA2: Empowered choice*, m=3.840). This desire for preferred choice is supported by Firat and Dholakia (2006:127) as well as Samuels (2008:221); and the ability to access media through mobile phones when convenient to the user is supported by Dimmick *et al.* (2010:2). The need for people to define choices is an outcome of the increased number of offerings available to consumers, which correspondingly results from fragmentation. Fragmentation means that people do not have to commit to a specific option (Brown, 2006:217; Firat & Dholakia, 2006:125). The freedom to choose offerings that are relevant to the individual at a particular time may offer an explanation of sorts to the choices people make in social media, in terms of the content they generate or access and entities they choose to follow or subscribe to. The author considers relativism to be an important differentiator between social media and mass media. Social media pertains to quality; whilst mass media concerns quantity. People access and use social media content that is relevant to their individual needs at a particular point in time. If one considers the 9th foundational premise of Service-dominant logic, *all social and economic actors are resource integrators* (Vargo & Lusch, 2008), under the context of relativism individuals integrate resource as they need it.

Digital media integration

The extensive use of mobile phones and social media, in addition to the way these platforms have been utilised, according to respondents (*FA1: Mobile addiction*, m=3.781; *FA2: Empowered choice*, m=3.840; *FA3: Convenient interconnection*, m=4.102; *FD1: Hyperreal cult*, m=3.433), has arguably altered the way respondents connect with each other and has influenced other activities, indicating the power these media exert in society. This finding supports McLuhan's (2006:108) notion of the "the 'message' of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs". If one considers that the wide spread penetration of digital media amongst respondents indicates general

social acceptance of digital media, this phenomenon could be construed as an outcome of environmental determinism.

The respondents' use of mobile media and social media demonstrates the three main themes of interactivity, namely: interactivity from the perspective of the user; interactivity as a feature of the medium; and interactivity as a process (Kiousis, 2002).

If one relates these findings to the technology acceptance model. The high use of mobile phones and social media network systems amongst respondents is assumed to support the construct of perceived ease of use (Davis, 1985). The second key construct of the model, perceived usefulness (Davis, 1985), considers the value the user derives from the technology. Based on the types of platforms accessed and the frequency of access it is reasonable to conclude that the second construct of perceived usefulness is also fulfilled by mobile phones and social media network systems.

9.4.3 Objective 3:

To determine the unique properties of digital media applicable to marketing communication efforts directed at Generation Y

The discussions for the third objective are arranged under the following sub-headings: interactivity; personalisation in digital media; and barriers to interactivity.

The empirical phase of the investigation conclusively confirms that digital media are an integral part of the respondents' lives. This implies that digital media represents a viable platform for brands to communicate with Generation Y, as represented by respondents in the study. The following properties of digital media are considered to offer relevant applications for use in the context of postmodern marketing and/or marketing communication.

Interactivity

The defining feature of digital media is interactivity. Interactivity is a multi-dimensional construct (Kiousis, 2002). The three main dimensions of interactivity are user perception, technology features and processes of interactivity. These dimensions can be used individually or in combination to provide meaningful communication experiences to consumers.

- Interactivity may take a variety of different forms and may consist of direct or indirect contact between brands and customers, thus contributing to customer relationship building. These interactions may be synchronous or asynchronous.

- The concept of interactivity extends to the creation, production and sharing of user generated content in the digital space.

- Interactivity also pertains to the ability of digital media to integrate with other platforms, for example, in the provision of location based services or responding to communication or content in other media; the location based aspect of digital media is reflected in the empirical results by, factor, *FA3: Convenient interconnection* (m=4.102).

- The digitisation of content converts data into binary form which generally allows for easier flow of content (interactivity) in the digital space because it minimises the need to convert material from analogue to digital format. Digitised content becomes a fluid commodity that can be exchanged across various digital platforms (for instance the compatibility of audio and video content accessible from both mobile phones and/or computers).

Personalisation in digital media

When using personal digital media, marketers should take advantage of the customisation properties made possible by digital media to issue personalised communication. Respondents are more receptive to personalised content, as proved by Factor, *FB1: Personalisation* (m=3.513). Personalisation, as a feature of direct marketing could be considered an application of micro-marketing that supports customer relationship building (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010:427).

Barriers to interactivity

Although digital media is used extensively amongst respondents at a social level there appears to be a barrier when it comes to interactions at the market level with brands, as demonstrated by a somewhat reluctant attitude to interact directly with brands (factor, *FD3: Interactive collaboration*, m=2.967). If one ignores the possible limitations imposed by infrastructural aspects on account of the fact that respondents are engaging with friends and associates in the digital space, perhaps marketers are not applying appropriate strategies or offerings to elicit interactions from consumers.

9.4.4 Objective 4:

To assess Generation Y's attitudes towards retail shopping and brands

The discussions for the fourth objective are arranged under the following sub-headings: brand authenticity; gender differences; and shopping.

Brand authenticity

The brands that individuals select tend to reflect the actual or intended characteristics of the individual (Firat *et al.*, 1995:42; Lemon, 2001:358; O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2002:113). This idea receives support from the empirical study in the form of factor, *FF2: Authentic representation* (overall m=4.039). Respondents consider authenticity to be an important attribute, presumably by selecting brands that convey authenticity the respondent then reflects the characteristic represented by the brand. Factor, *FC1: Innovation seeking* (overall m=3.585) shows that respondents are attracted to brands that are innovative. This finding supports Generation Y's demand for newness (Yarrow & O'Donnell, 2009:180). Interestingly, when comparing factors *FF2: Authentic representation* and *FC1: Innovation seeking*, against gender, male respondents appear to seek more innovation and authenticity from the brands they use than female respondents. This suggests that the use of brand names as marks of authenticity is important when targeting males.

Authenticity and innovation stand out as defining characteristics for brands to attract consumers. Brands that are able to offer their customers brand experiences will help differentiate themselves from competitive offerings (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010:248; Schultz & Schultz, 2004:12).

Gender differences

According to the empirical findings, female respondents are significantly more likely to demonstrate impulsive shopping behaviour than males (factor, *FE1: Impulsiveness*). Impulsiveness is an emotional response, since women are generally more emotional than men (Simon & Nath, 2004) it is conceivable that emotions account for differences between gender groups. Overall, the mean of factor *FE1: Impulsiveness* is m=3.430 for the entire sample, perhaps this general trend for impulsive behaviour could be viewed as an emotional response triggered by exposure to the chaos presented in the market in the form of an abundance of offerings. Schultz and Schultz (2004:302) and Kotler and Armstrong (2010:183) suggest that impulsiveness is an indication of innovators or early adopters because of their reliance on self-judgement.

A further gender difference reflected in the empirical findings is that females are less decisive about making shopping decisions than males (factor, *FE2: Indecisiveness*). This finding may be related to the fact that females seem to have more needs than men, which has given rise to the availability of more products and services developed to cater for these needs.

Shopping

Shopping is an important social activity amongst Generation Y and the purchases they make during these excursions serve as social currency in their conversations. This insight demonstrates that if consumers find a brand to be meaningful to them, they will discuss it amongst their social circle, which invariably consists of similarly minded people, thus a relevant consumer environment for the brand in question.

9.5   FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The empirical study yielded a combination of somewhat anticipated as well as unexpected findings. This section will firstly address the unexpected findings. Secondly, it will highlight important findings in the order of the objectives of this study:

- To indicate the key behavioural and attitudinal factors that are important to respondents;
- To indicate the factors that might explain respondents' behaviour towards digital media;
- To investigate explanatory relationships between important behavioural outcomes and attitudinal independent variables.

Unexpected findings

The unexpected findings concerned respondents' low inclination for online gaming and online engagement with brands, which were indicated by the low mean scores for factors, *FD2 Hyperreal escapism*, *FG1: Altruism*, *FF4: Involved consumers* and *FD3: Interactive collaboration*.

The reason behind these findings is assumed to be related to limiting factors pertaining to the disparities of the technology landscape in South Africa. South Africans do not have equal access to every available technology in the market, as a result of socio-economic discrepancies amongst citizens. These limitations include: access costs to pay for Internet services; access to broadband; and availability of appropriate equipment to participate in online gaming. Perhaps these limiting factors are also responsible for the lower levels of online interactivity than anticipated. One supposition is that due to economic and/or physical limitations, respondents restrict their Internet access to fulfil what they perceive to be their essential activities in their evaluation of required investment compared to return value.

The lower than expected online interactivity is considered to attribute to the finding that respondents are partial participants in the process of embedded marketing. In terms of embedded marketing, respondents indicate that they have opinions of their brands which

they are willing to share, and they are willing to participate in the development of their brands in a collaborative process. Respondents indicate that they share information about brands within relevant communities, thus contributing to the idea of the diffusion of marketing by multiple stakeholders. These findings all support the acceptance and implementation of embedded marketing by respondents. However, low mean scores for factors *FF4: Involved consumerism* and *FD3: Interactive collaboration*, indicate that respondents are less likely to formalise their opinions in the online space and engage with brands directly.

Important behavioural and attitudinal factors

Table 9.1 summarises the empirical findings in order of importance and interpreted postmodern characteristics as behavioural outcomes associated with the finding.

Table 9.1: Findings of relative importance and associated postmodern characteristic

FINDING	POSTMODERN CHARACTERISTIC
• Personal media such as mobile phones and social media are used extensively by respondents and respondents indicate a high level of dependence on these platforms.	• Demonstrates de-differentiation through displacement of subject and object; where the importance of the object (personal media) seems to supersede that of the subject (respondent).
• Brands should seek respondents' permission before communicating with them in respondents' personal media, such as mobile phone or social media platforms.	• Shows de-differentiation by the fact that respondents delineate which brands they permit to communicate with them.
• Respondents prefer to receive personalised communication in their personal media.	• Demonstrates pastiche through the self-referential preference for personalisation.
• Respondents perceive social media to have increased connectivity and reduced boundaries of time and space.	• Shows de-differentiation through the recognition of boundary-less communication and also illustrates hyperreality through the use of virtual media.
• Mobile phones in particular provide respondents with the freedom to conveniently access media content of their choice.	• Supports the postmodern notion that abundance does not eliminate preference.
• Respondents expect the brands they make use of to be authentic and innovative.	• Excessive exposure to hyperreality drives authenticity. • Innovation seeking supports anti-foundationalism.
• Respondents appear to be overwhelmed by the volume of product offerings available to them in the market and tend to react in one of two ways either behaving impulsively or indecisively.	• Behavioural outcome in response to fragmentation.
• People share content with others if they think it will be useful to them.	• Demonstrates postmodern marketing behaviour through embedded marketing.

FINDING	POSTMODERN CHARACTERISTIC
• Online gaming is not a significant activity amongst respondents.	• Use of online gaming is considered to be indicative of hyperreality.
• Respondents are keen to participate in the development and improvement of their brands. • Respondents use other people's experiences to help them make purchase decisions. • Although respondents make use of other's comments or experiences in the online space they are reluctant to add their own contributions.	• Indicates partial aspects of embedded marketing as demonstrated by the first two points.

The results of the empirical phase of the investigation demonstrated that respondents show postmodernism traits in their behaviour towards digital media and their reactions towards brands and marketing and/or marketing communication. The most dominant postmodern characteristics displayed by respondents were hyperreality, de-differentiation and fragmentation.

Significant variables affecting key behavioural and attitudinal factors

In addition, in an analysis to predict the four elements of the social evolution of the respondents, several attitudinal and behavioural factors were found to be statistically significant in predicting various aspects of the social evolution of respondents, and these were also affected by socio-economic conditions and/or and digital infrastructure. In order of the strongest effects, the demographic variables that had the most significant differences were: ethnicity, followed by behavioural variables such as cell phone usage, frequency of social media usage, and structural issues such as cell phone plan, average monthly Internet expenditure for cell phones, use of Internet bundles on cell phones, and the device used most often to access the Internet.

Social media predictors

Social media use was identified as an important behavioural outcome by respondents. Several independent factors were found to have significant associations with social media and thus could be considered explanatory and or predictors of social media. The dependent variables relating to social media and their corresponding explanatory independent variables are recorded in Table 9.3, cells with "+" denote significant positive explanatory relationships,

for instance the dependent variable *FD1: Hyperreal cult* has explanatory relationships with independent variables: *FA1: Mobile addiction*, *FB1: Personalisation*, *FC1: Innovation seeking*, *FE1: Impulsiveness*, *FF3: Resourceful collaboration* and *FF4: Involved consumerism*. Significant negative relationships were indicated by *FB4: Permission based, FF2: Authentic representation,* ethnicity and smartphone ownership.

Table 9.2: Dependent variables and associated predictor independent variables

Parameter		FD1: Hyperreal cult	FD2: Hyperreal escapism	FD3: Interactive collaboration	FD4: Dissolved boundaries
FA1: Mobile addiction		+			+
FB1: Personalisation		+	+	+	
FB4: Permission based			−		
FC1: Innovation seeking		+	+	+	
FE1: Impulsiveness		+			
FF2: Authentic representation			−		+
FF3: Resourceful collaboration		+	+		+
FF4: Involved consumerism		+		+	
Ethnicity	Black				
	White				0*
Smartphone ownership	Yes		−		
	No		0*		
Cell phone plan	Contract				−
	Prepaid				0*
Monthly Internet expenditure:	Less than R50				−
	R50 R100				
	R101+				0*
Cell phone usage:	Socialites		−		
	Conservatives		−		
	Conversationalists				
	Connoisseurs		0*		

+/- indicate direction of significant predictions

*The parameter is set to zero because it is redundant. Dimensions shaded in red indicate significant predictors

9.6 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Several managerial implications have already been alluded to in the discussion of the findings and the specific objectives of the study. These implications will now be elaborated on with reference to digital media under headings of: consumer collaboration; social media and social currency; permission based; personalisation; target impulsive behaviour; use of applications; and benefiting from postmodern characteristics

Consumer collaboration

Respondents have indicated a willingness to collaborate and contribute to brands and be part of product development. However, as deduced in a previous section, direct interactivity with brands is less common than expected. It is anticipated that consumer interactivity with brands in the context of marketing communication has the potential to increase presumably in conjunction with further lowering of barriers to access and the development of interactive marketing communication offerings that respondents find appealing.

Until the threshold for greater participation in interactive ventures is attained, it is advisable, when considering interactive campaigns, to emphasise interactivity in terms of the target market's capacity for interactivity, as a behavioural output, as noted by Rafaeli (1988) and Heeter (2000). It should also be acknowledged that consumers will decide if they are willing to collaborate with a brand (Schembri, 2006); collaboration and interactivity are therefore not guaranteed. A further consideration to generate greater interactivity between consumers and brands is the application of *two-step flow* which is the hypothesis that people are more affected by other people (key influencers) than the media. Respondents have demonstrated that they interact with their peers in the social media space; therefore perhaps brands should consider the appointment of key influencers, who would provide a human presence, to represent the brand in social media space.

The dependent variable *FD3: Interactive collaboration* is strongly associated with the concept of interactivity between respondents and brands. It was noted in the analysis of the significant coefficients of MANCOVA that predictor dimensions associated with increases in *FD3: Interactive collaboration* were *FB1: Personalisation*, *FC1: Innovation seeking* and *FF4: Involved consumerism*. Conceivably these findings could be translated to managerial applications to improve levels of interactivity between consumers and brands, perhaps by: increasing the level of personalised communication, conceivably people want to be acknowledged as individuals when they participate in interactive communication; supplying innovative offerings to provide a compelling reason for

consumers to interact; and the provision of suitable platforms for consumers to express themselves.

Social media and social currency

Respondents demonstrated that they use their cell phones on a daily basis and frequently access their social media networks. These activities help to maintain their social status. Potentially this insight could be leveraged by marketers by way of offering experiences that could benefit the respondents' social status. Heeter (2000:6) noted that individuals try to make sense of their worlds through self-expression. The provision of suitable experiences provides the user with social credit to exchange within their social networks. Social media represents viable platforms for marketers to engage with consumers, but marketers must be contextually relevant in these spaces. Marketing practitioners should adhere to the following guidelines when using social media:

- Be selective over the choice of social media application used by the organisation;
- Design, purchase or participate in social media applications;
- Keep social media communication with other communication featured in other touchpoints;
- Be active and interact with audiences;
- Keep content interesting;
- Comply with the etiquette of the medium;
- Communicate with people not at them;
- Apply an informal tone to better relate with social media users;
- Post authentic content; and
- Consider issues of audience accessibility (Kaplan & Haenlin 2010:65-67).

Permission based

The results of the empirical research clearly indicate that consumers prefer to receive communication from brands in their personal media if they have specifically given permission to these brands to communicate with them (Varnali *et al.,* 2011:5).

Personalisation

Consumers are more receptive to personalised communication in their personal media. Marketing practitioners should therefore consider the use of database marketing and perform customer profiling to identify suitable data for effective personalised communication (Brown, 1995:108; Varnali *et al.,* 2011:viii).

Target impulsive behaviour

Respondents in the empirical study indicated a tendency for impulsive shopping behaviour and uncertainty when deciding what products to purchase. A benefit of personal digital media is that it is not constrained by physical or time boundaries. Marketers should therefore consider leveraging this benefit to investigate methods that allow them to continue to communicate with consumers up to point of purchase. Dimmick *et al.* (2010:12) for instance highlighted the advantage of using digital media to communicate with individuals in *interstices*, spaces in between other scheduled activities. Consumers may make shopping decisions in real-time, through instant access to information through personal digital media. Some opportunities include the issuing of time limited offers through personal digital media to incentivise consumers to buy particular products, and sending consumers vouchers through personal digital media, particularly mobile phones, to conveniently redeem against purchases.

Use of applications

Digital media applications represent the interactive dimensions of feature and process. The development of applications allows brands to provide value to consumers that are associated with the brand's equities (examples include: music, games, themes, weather, sport scores, fashion trends, time management, magazines, travel tips and news to list a few). This idea of offering customers added value is in keeping with the 7th FP: *The enterprise cannot deliver value, but only offer value propositions* (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). The development of applications for digital media relates to the perceived usefulness construct of the technology acceptance model. The offering of applications by practitioners

to consumers provides an indirect or direct mechanism that allows consumers to interact with brands (Jenkins, 2006:558), and perhaps contribute to individuals' relative concepts of value-in-use (Grönroos, 2005:2-3).

Benefiting from postmodern characteristics

Some perceived marketing and/or marketing communication opportunities that leverage key characteristics of postmodernism have been proposed for implementation in digital media, and are summarised in Table 9.3.

Table 9.3: Opportunities and marketing communication tactics derived from postmodern traits

TRAIT	OPPORTUNITY	MARKETING COMMUNICATION TACTIC	MOBILE MEDIA	SOCIAL MEDIA
FRAGMENTATION	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).	✓	✓
DE-DIFFERENTIATION	Blurred boundaries and displacement between object and subject	• 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.	✓	✓
		• Marketers should communicate with the customer at the customer's convenience, for example, when the customer reaches out to communicate.	✓	✓
	Creating value	• Create customer experiences by providing meaningful value to the customer. For example, through the provision of related content such as relevant applications.	✓	✓
HYPERREALITY	Virtual environment	• Use social networks as alternative environments to communicate with customers.	Offers access to virtual platforms	✓
	Authenticity	• Drive authenticity by stimulating customers to converse or share their personal brand experiences with other people.	✓	✓
CHRONOLOGY	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.	✓	✓
PASTICHE	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.	✓	✓
ANTI-FOUNDATI-ONALISM	Unconventionality	• Leverage the unique properties of the platforms for innovation.	✓	✓
	Complex systems	• People belong to numerous networks. Stimulate communication within these networks that can be promulgated by members to their other networks.	✓	✓

9.7   CONCLUSIONS

Postmodernism as a cultural movement is purposefully vague to extend its applicability to different aspects of society; therefore it has been positioned as a process rather than a prescriptive model that has a convenient beginning and end. This thesis acknowledges that the concept of postmodernism helps to explain the transient nature of contemporary society characterised by short-lived trends that compete with established norms in a multi-cultural environment exposed to glocal influences, which collectively contribute to complexity and uncertainty and a sense of living at the edge of chaos.

This study has applied the postmodern lens to reflect on marketing and/or marketing communication practices using digital media in contemporary society. This study has aimed to highlight contemporary market realities as a result of postmodernism and has presented propositions that are reflective of postmodernism to potentially address marketing needs under postmodern conditions. Following from this, reflections are offered for deliberation.

9.7.1   Operationalisation of postmodernism through embedded marketing

Firstly, postmodernism is an intangible phenomenon, however aspects of postmodernism, particularly the concept of embedded marketing (see Firat & Dholakia, 2006:147-151), are echoed in the principles of service-dominant logic, which is a more tangible concept that offers possibilities for practical implementation. Therefore, it is reasonable to consider that the concept of service-dominant logic might provide a suitable conduit to implement postmodern ideals in the context of marketing and/or marketing communication. Furthermore, the interactive properties of digital media make it a useful tool to carry out sense and response communication, which would allow marketers to keep up with their customers in terms of communication efforts.

9.7.2 Conceptual framework

Secondly, a conceptual framework is proposed which is based on the findings presented in Tables 9.1, 9.2 and 9.3 and took cognisance of a) important behavioural and attitudinal factors indicated by respondents with respect to their perspectives of digital media in terms of personal use and its role in marketing and/or marketing communication; b) social media predictors; and c) marketing and/or marketing communication tactics that leverage postmodernism characteristics. Furthermore, the framework takes into account the characteristics of postmodern marketing as outlined in Figure 1.1, which highlights the differences between modern and postmodern marketing, characterising postmodern marketing as: multi-directional communication flow (marketer-to-customer, customer-to-marketers and customer-to-customer); embedded cultural practice; collaborative; diffused; and complex. The conceptual framework has been named *marketing transformation in a postmodern society*.

The conceptual framework envisages broadening the roles (de-differentiation) of *customers, communication* and *value exchange* to encompass greater diversity within these roles in line with the postmodern persuasion and use of digital media with marketing and/or marketing communication. Thus:

- Customers transform to collaborators;
- Communication transforms to interaction; and
- Value exchange transforms to value-in-use.

The rationale for these redefinitions follows and are visually demonstrated by means of an arbitrary consumer-marketer continuum which represents consumer and marketer stakeholder roles within marketing and/or marketing communication in the context of a postmodern society with digital media space.

Customers becoming collaborators

Fragmentation and de-differentiation have changed the relationship dynamics between customers and marketers. Digital media has allowed media audiences to make the

transition from passive to active participants who can express themselves in social media. Customers are important stakeholders. Customers want to take on a more active role with the brands they consume. This point has been identified empirically as well as conceptually through the notion of embedded marketing and the 6th FP: *co-creation* and 9th FP: *resource integrators.*

Figure 9.1 depicts the perceived transformation of consumers to collaborators on a consumer-marketing stakeholder role continuum, with the consumer at one end of the continuum and the marketer at the other end. This is an arbitrary scale and the distinctions are not definitive merely illustrative. The traditional role of the consumer in marketing and/or marketing communication is represented above the line on the continuum (marked as 1) and the new perceived role, is represented below the line on the continuum (marked as 2) and occupies a greater area of the spectrum, indicating the breadth of the role. This visual will be used in an analogous way to demonstrate the transitions for communication to interaction and value exchange to value-in-use and thus similar interpretations apply.

**Figure 9.1: Consumer-marketer stakeholder continuum: consumers becoming collaborators**
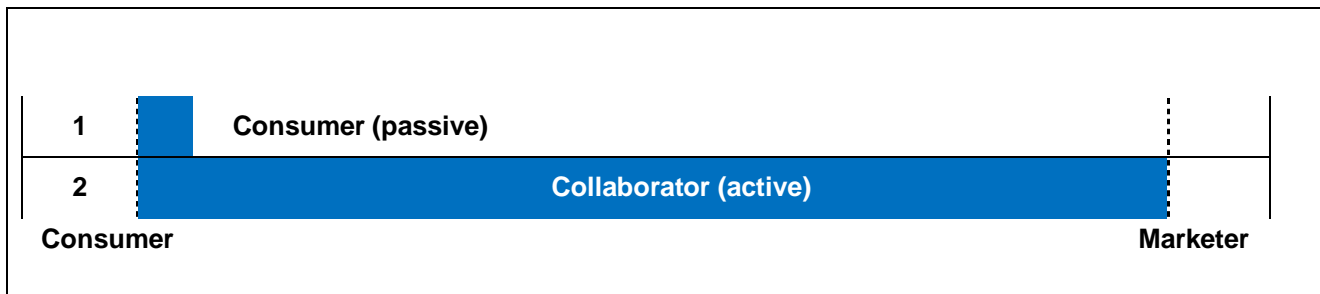
Communication becomes interaction

Digital media communication exchanges range from uni-directional to multi-directional; single media to multi-media; static to dynamic content; professionally engineered to home developed; mass to personal; business-to-consumer, business-to-business, consumer-to-business, and consumer-to-consumer. Ultimately all these exchanges are interactions. The definition of interactivity as a multi-dimensional construct takes into consideration the various permutations of exchanges between customers and brands, such as dimensions

of process, feature and perception. In Figure 9.2 the traditional role of communication in marketing and/or marketing communication is represented above the line on the continuum (marked as 1) and the new revised role of interaction, is represented below the line on the continuum (marked as 2) and occupies a greater area of the spectrum, indicating the breadth of the role.

Figure 9.2: Consumer-marketer stakeholder continuum: communication becomes interaction
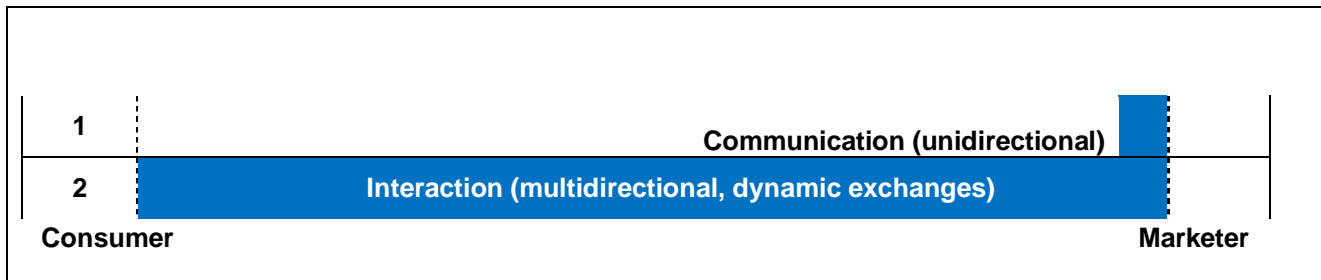
Value exchange becomes value-in-use

The term value-in-use has greater longevity and is a more encompassing term than value exchange. Value exchange as an expression is suggestive of the value obtained at the moment of transaction and is generally a two-way benefit, the party offering the goods or service receives financial value from the customer who purchases the goods or service. Value-in-use on the other hand is a more consumer-centric expression that pertains to the value that the user derives from using the goods or service which extend beyond the initial moment of purchase. Value-in-use is customer defined which demonstrates a manifestation of relativism, a feature of postmodernism (O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2002:119). Marketers could consider the application of value-in-use through digital media by inviting customers to express their particular moments of value-in-use with specific offerings. This action of personal storytelling shows emotive connections between the storyteller and the brand, which may inspire others to seek similar experiences from the brand. In Figure 9.3 the role of value exchange being at the moment of purchase in marketing is represented above the line on the continuum (marked as 1) and the revised role of value-in-use, is represented below the line on the continuum (marked as 2) and occupies a greater area of the spectrum, indicating the breadth of the dimension.
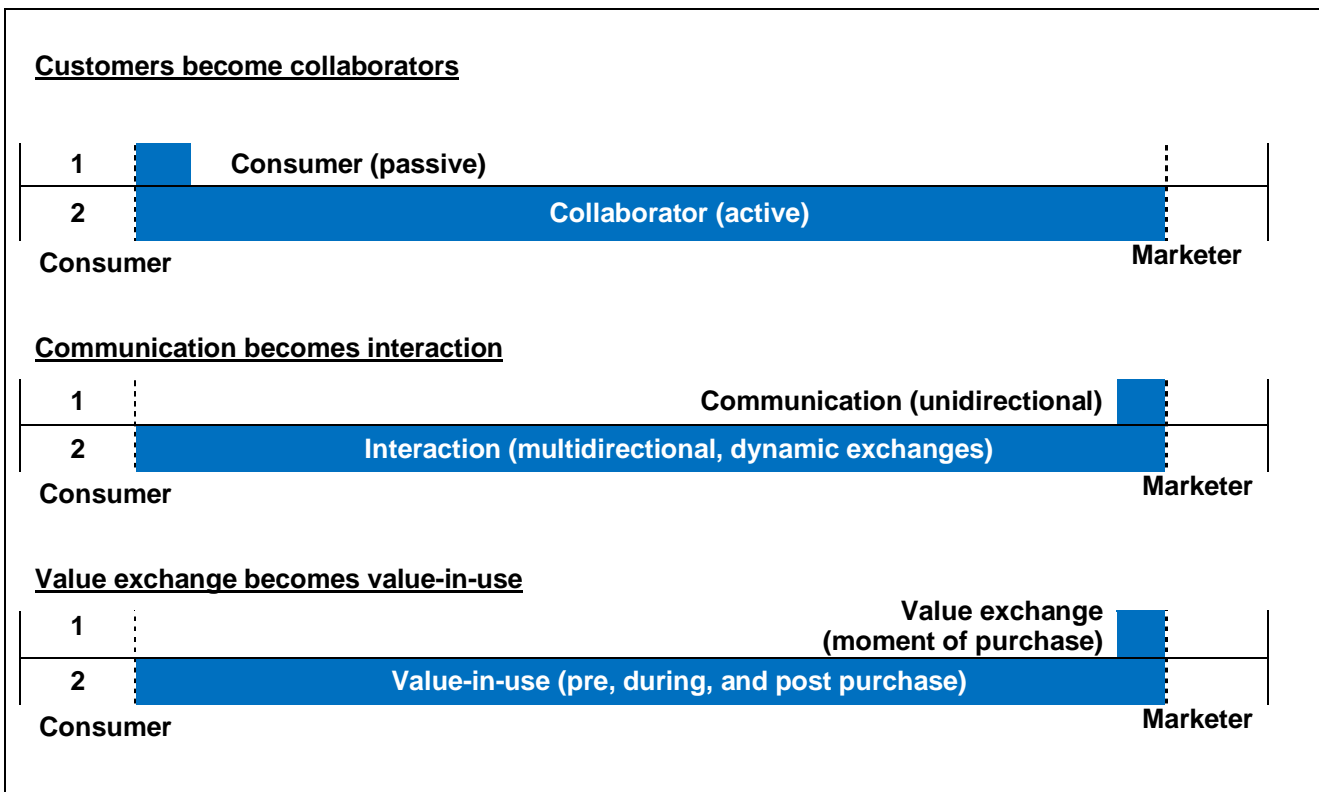
Figure 9.3: Consumer-marketer stakeholder continuum: value exchange becomes value-in-use

1	Value exchange (moment of purchase)
2	Value-in-use (pre, during, and post purchase)

Consumer · Marketer
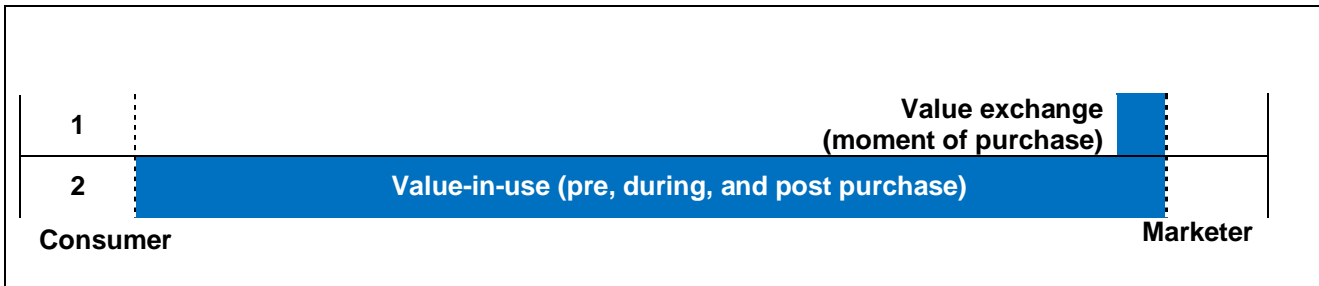
Contribution of conceptual framework

It is anticipated that the conceptual framework proposed will contribute to postmodern thinking in the context of marketing and/or marketing communication at both the academic and applied level; to benefit the market and advance the marketing discipline. The three aspects of the conceptual framework (*marketing transformation in a postmodern society)* are summarised in Figure 9.4.

Figure 9.4: Marketing transformation in a postmodern society

<u>Customers become collaborators</u>

1	Consumer (passive)
2	Collaborator (active)

Consumer · Marketer

<u>Communication becomes interaction</u>

1	Communication (unidirectional)
2	Interaction (multidirectional, dynamic exchanges)

Consumer · Marketer

<u>Value exchange becomes value-in-use</u>

1	Value exchange (moment of purchase)
2	Value-in-use (pre, during, and post purchase)

Consumer · Marketer

It is hoped that this exploratory study has demonstrated the need to adapt marketing and/or marketing communication theories and processes in response to changes in society (whether it be culture, consumers, the market, or forms of media) to the benefit and advancement of the marketing discipline.

This study has contributed to the extant body of knowledge concerning Generation Y and their use of digital media in the context of marketing and/or marketing communication by offering insight into Generation Y's behaviour and attitudes towards digital media and their roles in marketing and/or marketing communication.

9.8   RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER STUDY

9.8.1 Recommendations for further research emanating from the study's limitations

The following recommendations for further study are derived from certain limitations of the current study. In terms of the sample, the sample used in this study consisted exclusively of students enrolled in full-time tertiary education at a single university campus, which limits the generalisability of results from the study to the wider population of Generation Y. The behaviours and attitudes of students towards digital media in the context of marketing and/or marketing communication are not necessarily the same as those for other members of the Generation Y cohort in South Africa. In order to obtain more generalisable findings, replication studies are recommended using samples that are more representative of the Generation Y population group. The suggestion is that future research should include younger (such as school-going) as well as employed members of Generation Y across South Africa, and ensure representation of all ethnic groups in the country.

9.8.2 Recommendations for future research

This exploratory research produced a series of findings, which potentially could be explored further in confirmatory research. The specific areas of interest for future research are as follows:

- The study noted that several independent variables were highly significant in relation to respondents' use of digital media, namely: ethnicity, cell phone usage, frequency of social media usage, cell phone plan, average monthly Internet expenditure for cell phones, use of Internet bundles on cell phones, and the device used most often to access the Internet. South African society is non-homogenous and there is wide socio-economic disparity between different cultures and ethnic groups. Therefore future studies could be conducted to further investigate potential reasons for these differences.

- One of the objectives of the study was to develop a quantitative questionnaire to investigate postmodern characteristics observed in respondents towards digital media as well as respondents' behaviours and attitudes in the context of marketing and/or marketing communication. It is postulated that this preliminary questionnaire be evaluated critically for use in further studies a measurement scale of postmodern characteristics.

- Interactivity has been highlighted as a unique property of digital media. It was noted that respondents make use of this interactive quality in the fulfilment of their social needs, but are less inclined to utilise interactivity in the market place and engage with brands through digital media. The recommendation therefore is for further investigation to address respondents' motivation or lack thereof to interact with brands in digital media.

- It is suggested that the conceptual framework proposed in Section 9.8, *marketing transformation in postmodern society*, be subjected to further investigation for potential refinement.