Digimodernism; the Future is Now!

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**Abstract**

How does the shift into digimodernism radically alter society, further upsetting the balance between consumer and marketing, and what challenges does this shift present to marketing communications?

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ABSTRACT

Since the popularisation of the internet in 1995, it, and other technologies, has far surpassed anything we could have imagined – not only in terms of the actual technology but also in terms of how it has changed and shaped society. The postmodern society truly flourished with this technology, and consumers, who had already broken free of the modernistic constraints, quickly adapted to it, gaining more knowledge, and therefore more power, than ever before. Simultaneously, this technology created ways by which consumers could consume media; their role of ‘reader’ began to switch to ‘author’, as it became more and more common for the consumer to create, personalise and adapt. From books, to shoes, to music, to television shows; consumers suddenly became a link in the production chain, rather than a passive receptor at the end.

This paper argues that due to these changes, we are no longer a solely postmodern society. Instead, we have begun to shift into a new paradigm, a paradigm where society, although still featuring many of the postmodern tenants, is heavily influenced by, and dependant on, technology. Alan Kirby calls this shift digimodernism, and it is this digimodern theory that is discussed and applied throughout the paper.

The digimodern consumer, active, participative and knowledgeable, has forced marketing to rapidly evolve. Struggling to come to terms with postmodernism, the field must again adapt and acknowledge that the digimodern consumer can now be seen as an active link in the marketing process, and not simply a passive receiver.

This study seeks to answer the problem statement of; how does the shift into digimodernism radically alters society, further upsetting the balance between consumer and marketing, and what challenges does this shift present to marketing communications?

The paper approaches this problem formulation by first discussing postmodernism and the postmodern consumer, before moving on to discuss digimodernism, and the digimodern consumer. Not only is this easier to follow, given that it is chronological, but it also allows the reader to note that digimodernism does not present a clean break from postmodernism, but simply a technologically enhanced evolution.
The digimodern consumer is highlighted as being active, demanding, impatient, knowledgeable and channel-hopping, seeking collaborative and engaging relationships. In order to investigate this further, a focus group is used so as to ascertain how today’s consumers consumer and interact with media, as well as investigating the claim that age plays an important role (those born after 1980 being ‘digital natives’ and thus far more accustomed to technology and digital media). Five cases were used in the focus group, all of which can be classified as digimodern, i.e. they allow for interaction with the consumer.

The results of the focus group were overwhelming; media consumption has changed irreversibly and this, together with other technological advances, has resulted in today’s consumers being impatient and demanding. Although the cases were seen as fun, innovative and entertaining by the participants, the relationship between effort and reward was seen to be far too uneven for it to be worthwhile. In some cases, the final message and/or sender were completely lost in the case.

Ultimately, all the cases were seen as taking too much time and/or effort to decipher what was, in the end, something that could have been presented in a much more straightforward manner.

In conclusion, the study finds that while the shift of digimodernism is a legit one, having absolute effects on media consumption, consumers and marketing, it also presents a paradox; while technology allows for incredibly interactive campaigns, the digimodern consumer is far too demanding and impatient to participate in these campaigns. Furthermore, these campaigns are sometimes so entertaining; the message/sender is quickly forgotten, overshadowed by the effects.

Consumers simply do not have the time or patience to take part in or decipher complex campaigns. Marketing must engage yet respect time-starved consumers, making fun, quick, relevant and honest campaigns, through which a clear message is delivered promptly, allowing the consumer to interpret it, and move on.
Age proved not to play a significant role. However, it is suggested that future research could carry out further focus groups, with younger participants, and/or different nationalities. Those born in 1980 can not truly have grown up with digital technology no more than those born in 1978, consequently, a focus group with participants born from 1990-onwards might prove to yield very different results.
**INTRODUCTION**

One of my all-time favourite faux-pas is that of Clifford Stoll in an article entitled ‘The Internet? Bah!’ from Newsweek in 1995 (Newsweek, 1995);

“Nicholas Negroponte, director of the MIT Media Lab, predicts that we'll soon buy books and newspapers straight over the Internet. Uh, sure. (...) We're promised instant catalog shopping—just point and click for great deals. We'll order airline tickets over the network, make restaurant reservations and negotiate sales contracts. Stores will become obselete. So how come my local mall does more business in an afternoon than the entire Internet handles in a month? Even if there were a trustworthy way to send money over the Internet—which there isn't—the network is missing a most essential ingredrient of capitalism: salespeople. What's missing from this electronic wonderland? Human contact. Discount the fawning techno-burble about virtual communities. Computers and networks isolate us from one another.”

Needless to say, Clifford was....well, he was wrong. But then, he could be forgiven for this thought. In 1995, the internet was barely recognisable from the internet we know today (Chapman, 2009). It had only just become commercial; Netscape had been launched the year before, webmail wouldn’t arrive for another two years, and it wasn’t until 1998 that the now all familiar Google would be launched – in beta, of course (Chapman, 2009). Yet at the time of writing, postmodernism was in its heyday (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995; Featherston, 1991). This is the paradigm that of course ‘produced’ consumerism (Brown, 1999; ), which in turn, produced ‘us’; the postmodern consumer. The consumer who is typified by individualism, choice, greed, dissatisfaction, customisation (Nauman & Hufner, 1985; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995; Kotler & Kartajaya, 2010; Lipovetsky, 1983, 1987, 1990 (cited in Cova, 1997; 299)); Weil, 1994; Dholakia, Firat & Venkatesh, 1994), and who is represented as, “...restless, cynical, world weary, self obsessed hedonists demanding instant gratification and ever-increasing doses of stimulation . . . a moronic inferno of narcissists cretinized by television” (Lasch, 1978; Callinicos, 1989; cited in Brown, 1994: 36). As Dholakia, Firat and Venkatesh asserted (1995: 53); “postmodernity is consumerism, and consumerism is postmodernity”. And this was, remember, before Amazon.com
existed; before Facebook; before email; before Twitter; before online shopping of any kind existed. If we were the postmodern consumer before all of this, can we really be the same postmodern consumer now?

The internet democratised information (Adelson, 2008), leaving the already fickle postmodern consumer with their “inbuilt early warning system that detects incoming commercial messages, no matter how subtle, and automatically neutralises them” (Brown, 2003: 5) with eyes wide open, relentless in their pursuit for information. It paved the way for social networks and social media, which in turn have thrown open the doors to instant, global communication further shifting the balance of power between brand and consumer to a point where it can quite easily be argued that the consumer is an integral part of the marketing mix (Christensen, Firat & Torp, 2005: 159).

Though it’s not just the internet; technology has become an integral part of our lives. From the way we communicate with each other, to the way we shop, and from the way we consume media, to what kinds of media we have to consume, technology has had fundamental effects on all of these. The way we view television is radically different; not only is it now digital, but we can fast forward through adverts, pause live broadcasts, and record without using any kind of disc or ‘tape’. We use our remote controls to ‘vote’, or to access further information (BBC), in other words; we interact with our televisions, or with the programmes or adverts. But why watch programmes on television when you can watch them online? Where you can interact with adverts to such an extent, you can create your own customised ending? If we’re going that far, why don’t you become the star of the advert? Or be the creative force behind the advert? Surely we can not believe us to be in the same period of postmodernism as we were back in 1995?

At the same time the Newsweek article was published, other theorists were arguing for the end of postmodernism (Eshelman, 2008; Lipovetsky, 2005; Bourriaud, 2009), most citing technology as a major reason for this death. While I do not claim that postmodernism is over, what I will come to argue in this paper is that with technological power in our hands, we must begin to recognise that we are moving out of ‘traditional’, if
you will, postmodernism. We are, as a society, beginning to shift into a new cultural paradigm, a paradigm that has been called ‘digimodernism’.

What this paper will examine is;

HOW DOES THE SHIFT INTO DIGIMODERNISM RADICALLY ALTER SOCIETY, FURTHER UPSETTING THE BALANCE BETWEEN CONSUMER AND MARKETING, AND WHAT CHALLENGES DOES THIS SHIFT PRESENT TO MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS?
Lara Mulady Digimodernism
STRUCTURE AND DELIMITATION

STRUCTURE

This paper is set out in what I hope is a logical, straightforward and easy to read manner. Following this paragraph, I will give discuss some points that came to my attention during the research and writing process, points that would otherwise make the results of this paper quite different, and points that must be taken in to consideration when reading my argumentation. Following this section, I will introduce my hypothesis where I state what I believe to be the current situation regarding society, marketing and digimodernism.

The next section is my method. This section covers not only my choice of theory, but also introduces those that provide corroboration to my arguments. I also discuss my choice of empirical research method, as well as a small paragraph on the style of the paper. Following this, I begin the body of my paper by taking a chronological approach and working from postmodernism through to digimodernism, enabling the reader to see how the paradigms have developed, and blur into one another.

Next, I introduce my focus group, giving the theory behind it, reasons for it, and other necessary aspects surrounding my choice. From here I delve into the analysis; a detailed examination of the results of my focus group, balancing my results with theory and thereby providing firm ground from which to give my conclusion. After my conclusion, which will sum up the findings, and provide not only an answer to my problem statement, but also prove my hypothesis right or wrong, I will discuss some suggestions for future research.

DELIMITATION

There are a number of facts that one must bear in mind for this paper. The first most important one I believe to be that my focus group was held in Denmark, and all participants are of a Danish background. This is important as the theory of digimodernism is firmly rooted in technology,
technology which is not as fully integrated in Denmark as it is in other Western countries, for example, the United Kingdom, or the United States\(^1\). This of course has some effect on ‘where’ the Danish society is compared to other countries, and thus, how much society (my participants) are ‘aware’ of some of the tenants of digimodernism. However, while this might have had some effect, there are other factors that factors that present greater possibly variations, such as age which will be discussed during my discussion for future research.

The somewhat ‘brief’ section on postmodernism and the postmodern consumer is of course because this knowledge is assumed at this level. On top of this, it would take up valuable time and space. For this same reason, I have chosen to base my paper on the one major theory of digimodernism. This is also due to the fact, as will be discussed, that as this is still a very new area, concurrent theories are quite hard to find, however, I have used others in order to authenticate my claims.

I would have liked to have gone in to detail regarding social media as this is clearly an area strongly related to digimodernism. However, due to time constrictions, I am unable to do so.

I presume that social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Skype and Google Voice need not be explained in detail.

All videos mentioned and used in my PowerPoint presentation can be found as .avi files on the USB stick, provided with the CD of the focus group, at the end of the paper. I will not describe the videos unless it is necessitated at some point in the paper.

The last point I’d like to make clear is that spelling and grammatical mistakes in quotes, are taken directly from the original source.

\(^1\) A good example here would be digital television. The US switched in 2007 (DTV.gov), the UK in 2007 (BBC News), and Denmark in 2009 (DR)
QR CODES & IMAGES

Throughout this paper, as you might already have noticed, I have placed QR codes and other images. QR codes are two-dimensional barcodes, created in Japan in 1994 (Pedersen, 2010). They can contain alphanumeric character, symbols, binary, and other kinds of code yet remain simple (due to the lack of a third dimension) and can therefore be quickly read by mobile phones with cameras, smartphones, and other scanners. The reason I’m using them is partly due to the fact that, well, they’re fun, and also to highlight technology today, and how information from one source, i.e. this paper, can be instantly linked to a source that is intangible and virtually anywhere in the world. Some of them are text, some are video clips. Some of them are relevant, but by no means 100% necessary for the paper, and some of them, as you might find out, are just for the hell of it. It will not be a requirement to scan any of the codes, as I can not presume that a) you have time, b) you want to, and c) you have a phone capable of reading the codes. However, I do hope you give one a go, and see where you end up. They are also discussed in the focus group, so this can serve as an introduction to them.

The images used throughout the paper carry no significant meaning. They are to break up the text, and are mostly from a technological era long gone, purely used to make a interesting and fun visual link.
HYPOTHESIS

It is my belief that due to the overwhelming influence and integration of technology in our everyday lives, we have moved out of a steady state of postmodernism, and in to a transitory phase of digimodernism. In this state, technology has become such an integral part of our lives, that we no longer consume media in ‘traditional’ ways; we scan barcodes to access websites, we watch television online, we shop through our mobiles, we change the outcome of an advert, and vote or participate in television programmes through our mobiles – just to name a few. This has of course affected marketing. Consumers are now able to participate not only in the actual marketing, but also in the planning, conception, development and execution.

The most obvious challenge presented to marketing because of this is of how exactly marketing can integrate the consumer in these steps. But this leads on to the more critical question of should marketing integrate the consumer?

Mountain Dew, Heinz Tomato Ketchup, Peperami, and Ford are just a few examples of companies who are currently using, or have used, consumers in the making of their product (Mountain Dew\(^2\)); the making of their adverts (Heinz and Peperami\(^3\); and the entire marketing of their product (Ford\(^4\), to great media coverage, yet my hypothesis is this; while media is undoubtedly being consumed in new ways, and while we’re seeing a rush of interesting and fun campaigns, where consumers must interact with the advert in order to fully understand it, or receive it, my hypothesis is that this will soon come to an end. Consumers do not have the time or patience to solve puzzles, or scan a code in order to access a piece of information they could have simply read. Technology maybe integrated in society, but ‘just because we can, doesn’t mean we should’.

\(^2\) For more, please see http://www.democracy.com/
\(^3\) For more, please see http://www.topthis.tv/ and http://bit.ly/c1DAG
\(^4\) For more, please see http://www.fordvehicles.com/fiestamovement/
Furthermore, while companies and brands may go on using social media, e.g. Facebook, as means through which consumers and brands can interact, communicate and collaborate (in terms of recommendations and suggestions), the role of consumers in the creative conception of an advert or campaign will not continue to be a fundamental one. Simply put, no consumer would have ever dreamed up having a gorilla play Phil Collins’ ‘In the Air Tonight’ to advertise Cadbury’s Dairy Milk Chocolate\(^5\).

Throughout the course of this paper, I will seek to answer my problem statement and in doing so, prove, or disprove, my hypothesis.

\(^5\) Please see USB for video
METHOD

Over the following pages, I will discuss the theories I have chosen to use, as well as those I have not, giving reasons for my preference. I will also examine a number of other points, from my choice of title, to the method of empirical research. Although this section is quite long, it is intended to answer any questions the reader may have regarding the choice of subject, theory and method before the main body of the paper is reached, thereby giving the paper a smooth flow.

DIGIMODERNISM: THE FUTURE IS NOW!

Firstly, I’d like to explain the reason for my choice of title; Digimodernism; the Future is Now! I chose this title for a number of reasons. Firstly, it sums up my paper in a sentence. As will come to be discussed, we are shifting into a new paradigm, one which would have seemed far too futuristic to be believable just 15 years ago, and one which in some respects still seems slightly unbelievable. With today’s average pocket calculator containing more power than the computers that sent the Apollo 11 mission to the moon (Saran, 2009) and with faster, smaller and powerful computers being released what feels like every month, technology has thrown us into a sci-fi age. We might not be driving floating cars and living on Mars, but you wouldn’t be blamed for thinking it’s not far off.

Secondly, sci-fi itself is another reason for the title. ‘The future is now!’ is oddly reminiscent of a 1950s advertisement, and the sci-fi age of the 50s, à la ‘Lost in Space’, or later, ‘Forbidden Planet’. Short, concise, and slightly fantastical, it captures attention and for a second, we can realise that this time we live in is really rather spectacular.

Finally, we do live in a rather spectacular age. If we take a step back and look at what we can do, and what the generation before us could do, the gap is staggering. The calculator vs. space computer is but one example of how technology has sped forward. Mobile phones are another example. Remember the first mobile phones? Now think of the iPhone 4; augmented reality; online access via mobiles; barcode readers; the list goes on and on.
As I will come to argue in this paper, changes in technology have altered the way in which consumers use media, how they communicate, and how they should be communicated to. It is in this respect that we must realise that the future of the postmodern consumer is the digimodern consumer, and that already today, we are the digimodern consumer.

IS POSTMODERNISM REALLY DEAD?

The claim that "postmodernism is dead" can be traced back through the years to 1977 (Kirby, 2010a) with a number of professors and theorists declaring that the paradigm in which today’s society seems to flourish, in fact ended before a lot of modern society was even born.

Yet this paper does not claim that postmodernism is dead, has ended, or indeed that it ever will or can end (Kirby, 2009: 5). Instead, what I will come to argue represents a shift; an extension of postmodernism, or rather; an undeniable mutation in technology which has influenced society in such a integral way, and in such an overwhelming manner, that it has pushed us forward, so that we (at the very least) have begun the journey in to a new cultural paradigm.

These technological mutations and societal changes manifest in some kind of revolution, a revolution which affects the way we live our lives, the way we communicate, the way we interact with each other, and the way we interact with media. As a result of this, the way by which we, or ‘consumers’, are reached has changed, and it is this claim that will be discussed in the later part of this paper.

As Alan Kirby so rightly states; “The world has changed and theory must change with it” (2009: 32). Mr Kirby is of course not the only theorist who has contested this, and although he is the primary author I have chosen to use (for reasons I will discuss later in this section), I will be bringing in to play other theories which support his claims. In the following paragraphs, I will introduce digimodernism, the main theory I will be using, as well as the main supplementary theories and theorists.
There are a number of less crucial theorists who also provide interesting premises similar to digimodernism, yet for the most part, these focus on the artistic world, or literature, which although of course relevant for a new paradigm (if in fact that’s what this is!), they do not quite provide the same support as that of, for example, Robert Samuel. I will however introduce them, as although not indispensable, they do, nonetheless, all make the similar claim that we have, at the very least, begun to edge away from postmodernism. Once introduced, I will also briefly discuss why I have deemed them unsuitable as a major source.

As will become apparent, all these sources are – especially for the world of academia – new, some only just published. This unfortunately means that compared to other subjects, I have limited access to sources, but it is my belief that this is a highly important and relevant topic, and it is my hope that the comparative shortness of sources is justified by this relevance and importance.

This belief, of course, has both upsides and downsides. The upsides are that I have almost free reign in my discussions, and have the luxury of not being too ‘constrained’ by existing texts and theories. The downside is that it could be argued that I lack sufficient sources with which to validate my claims. I have encountered this problem before, and after arguing my case (i.e. I thought it would be exciting, interesting and extremely apt to tread some new ground in the marketing arena), I was met with the rather deflating reply that ‘next time I should choose a subject which has been written about before.’ Of course I understand the reasons behind this reply, but at the same time it frustrated me, immensely. Suffice to say; I realise that there might be a lack of sources in regard to digimodernism, but this is always the case with new theories. I hope I argue my points sufficiently enough (with enough sources!) to prove that digimodernism is the most suitable term that sums up the relatively recent changes in society, and therefore is a fitting term for the ‘movement’ we now find ourselves in, and the movement that marketing must now wake up to.
Why Digimodernism?

The main theory in this paper is digimodernism, which as a theory, has roots which can be traced back around 15 years. It is not named, of course, but the claims of postmodernism being ‘over’ or of postmodern marketing needing a revolution around this time are discussed by various theorists and authors in texts and books (Samuels, 2010; Lipovetsky, 2005; Dholakia, Firtat, & Venkatesh, 1995; Brown, 1999; Addis & Podestà, 2005; Kotler & Kartajaya, 2010). However, digimodernism, as a term, is still rather new. Alan Kirby first called this “modulated continuity” (2009; 2) of postmodernism, ‘pseudo-modernism’, a term which originated in 2006 in an essay for the journal ‘Philosophy Now’ (Kirby, 2010b). Yet in his book from 2009, ‘Digimodernism; How New Technologies Dismantle the Postmodern and Reconfigure our Culture’ the paradigm is renamed as digimodernism (2009: 3).

It is this book that I have chosen to use as my primary literary source for a number of reasons. Firstly, quite simply, it struck me as the most relevant in terms of marketing, as “in its pure form, the digimodernism text permits the reader or viewer to intervene textually, physically to make text, to add visible content or tangibly shape narrative development” (Kirby, 2009; 1). The implications of this (which I will go in to detail with later) are obviously apparent. Secondly, the changes in technology in recent years have been so fantastical, that it seems only rational that they would also have a significant effect on how we live our lives, and thus, the society in which we live.

Many theorists (Simmons, 2008; Samuels, 2010; Firtat & Dholakia, 2006; Kotler & Kartajaya, 2010; Fitchett & Shankar, 2002) have recognised and acknowledge the effects that technology has had on both consumers and thus society, yet discuss them in a postmodern frame. In their paper from 2005, Michela Addis and Stefano Podestà discuss how marketing has fallen in to a “vicious circle” (2005: 401) with no way out, yet still look towards postmodernity to provide an answer.

6 I will refer to this book simply as ‘Digimodernism’ for the remainder of the paper.
It is true that even postmodernism has had a hard time being accepted in the tried and tested world of marketing. In his book ‘Postmodern Marketing’ from 1993, Stephan Brown tried to convince people of the serious implications that postmodernism presented to marketing. He discusses how “marketing thought has thus far been comparatively uncontaminated by postmodernism” (1993: 46) and how the Kotlerite assumptions of “analysis, planning, implementation and control” (1993: 7) still reign. The paper goes on to discuss the limitations that marketing sets upon itself by not fully recognising postmodernism; “The undeniable achievements and, after decades of research, the sheer inertia of modern marketing are sufficient to ensure that it will not be readily dislodged, particularly by a philosophy which, in its more extreme manifestations, appears primarily to propose nihilism...”. Yet as Dekel, Prince and Beaver claim in ‘The Changing Orientation of Marketing; an Emerging Post-Modern Perspective’, perhaps, however, modern marketing can be upset by undeniable technological changes (2007: 253-254);

“It could be argued that in the future, given the opportunity, customers will want to design for themselves and purchase individualized artefacts. This is mainly because they have changed from passive recipients of goods and services to pro-active assemblers of signs and symbols. This will be an important sea-change for marketers and organizations alike operating in this new post-modern world.”

It is my belief that with such monumental changes taking place in society due to technology, the paradigm of postmodernism quite simply must be changing in some respect. Although there are a number of theorists (who I will come to mention) who also believe that postmodernism has had its heyday, none of these have attributed technology as the source of the changes to the same extent as Kirby.

“There are various ways of defining digimodernism. It is the impact on cultural forms of computerization (inventing some, altering others). It is a set of aesthetic characteristics consequent on that process and gaining a unique cast from their new context. It’s a cultural shift, a communicative revolution, a social organisation. The most immediate way of describing digimodernism is this: it’s a new form of textuality” (Kirby, 2009: 50).
As this quote suggests, the book focuses on the changes that have occurred in technology from around the mid-1990s, and the effects these changes have had on how consumers receive and interact with media channels. These can be ‘new media’, the internet for example, but also more traditional media, such as magazines or television, which are simply consumed in a different manner. Kirby argues that due to technology, the consumer has been granted an authoritative role, and thus creates text where none existed before (2009: 51), not as a result of reading and interpreting suggested meaning, but as an act separated from their reading or viewing; the act is physical (2009: 51), examples include QR codes, interactive YouTube videos, the television programmes ‘Big Brother’, ‘Pop Idol’, Wikipedia, and the computer game ‘World of Warcraft’, as well as countless other games. Yet in the digimodern text, the author is always plural; the digimodern text (and indeed digimodernism) is characterised by being incomplete, being hard to capture, constant shifting of textual functional roles (e.g. author, producer, reader etc), unlimited, and inherently digital (Kirby, 2009: 51); “Put simply, it is the impact of computerization on all forms of art, culture and textuality. It is also the dominant cultural force field of the 21st century, the successor to a postmodernism which reigned supreme throughout the 1980s and 1990s but is now widely felt to have had its day” (Kirby, date unknown).

As I will argue in this paper, this revolution in text has had, will have, and must have, revolutionary changes in marketing communications, due to the way consumers interact with media, and consume media. As Jonathan Harris says (Harris, 2009), “The momentum of technological growth is too strong for us to prevent it from defining our future. Like it or not, our future world will largely be digital.”

ROBERT SAMUEL

In order to substantiate my claims of digimodernism, I will also draw up on Robert Samuel, author of the recently published (2010) ‘New Media, Cultural Studies, and Critical Theory after Postmodernism: Automodernity from Zizek to Laclau’. For this paper I will be drawing upon both this book, and his 2008 essay from the book ‘Digital Youth, Innovation, and the Unexpected’, edited by Tara McPherson, entitled ‘Auto-Modernity

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7 This will be discussed later in the paper
after Postmodernism: Autonomy and Automation in Culture, Technology, and Education’. Both his aforementioned book and this essay argue that we have moved into a new cultural period which he names ‘automodernity’; a new world formed by the encounter between digital automation and personal autonomy. This encounter of mechanisation and liberty, allows traditional borders between areas of our lives to be broken down, giving consumers a vast amount of power. Samuels argues:

“[T]he more mass society makes us feel that we are just a number and that our voices do not count, the more we need to simply use technology to have our autonomy registered through automation. For example, one of the appealing aspects of popular television shows like American Idol is that they allow for the individual viewer to call in and register his or her own preference and presence (2008: 234).”

This quote demonstrates the impact technology has upon a text, and thus the new power and abilities this gives to the consumer. This change “represents a social, psychological, and technological reaction to postmodernity” (2010: ix).

Although Samuels’ book focuses on the social aspects of society (politics and so forth), it does keep the media as a central role, as well as highlighting changes in consumer behaviour brought about by technological development. Samuels’ theories differ to those of Kirby as the technological developments discussed here are less focused on the consumption of media, and more on technological products and how we use them. For example, he discusses how iPods (2010: 20) have democratised music, enabling us to listen to our own playlists, wherever we want. Mobile phones are also discussed, and the tendency for people to forget where they are when using them, stating (2010:21);

“Like so many other automodern technologies, cell phones allow people to enter into a technological flow where the difference between the individual and the machine breaks down. In other terms, due to the fluid and immersive nature of these technologies, people forget that they are using them, and in many ways, they become one with their machines.”
Yet I place more value upon Samuels’ texts than the following theorists precisely because of the close relation between technology and society he emphasises. This emphasis is similar to Kirby’s, as overall, it has resulted in us moving into “a new era of cultural history, which is dominated by the paradoxical combination of social automation and individual autonomy” (Samuels, 2010; 3).

ALTERMODERNITY, PERFORMATISM, AND HYPERMODERNITY
In relation to digimodernism, there were a handful of other theories I encountered which all claim that we have moved on, or are moving on, from postmodernism, but which focus on other cultural aspects rather than technology. Of course, if my paper were less technologically orientated, perhaps these would have sufficed, yet I felt they lacked relevance and, compared to Alan Kirby and Robert Samuels, they lacked the strength to truly offer support to my arguments. However, what they do provide is further confirmation, as previously mentioned, that there are a number of theorists and authors who claim that we have moved, or are moving, in to a new cultural paradigm.

ALTERMODERNISM
Nicolas Bourriaud is an art critic and is currently the Gulbenkian Curator for Contemporary Art at Tate Britain. He declared postmodernism as dead, quite dramatically, with his ‘Altermodern Manifesto’ at the Tate Triennial exhibition in 2009 (Bourriaud, 2009). In this, he describes altermodern culture as; “A new modernity [...] reconfigured to an age of globalisation – understood in its economic, political and cultural aspects” (Bourriaud, 2009). He focuses on the effects that globalisation is having on the arts, and sees artists as responding to the ‘creolisation’ of the world;

“Postmodernism is over, and we don’t know exactly what’s going on after that. Altermodern is in a way a dream-catcher, trying to capture the characteristics of this modernity to come, this modernity which will be specific for the 21st century. Today we are more living in a maze, and we have to get meanings out of this maze, and this is the big stakes around altermodern, what is our modernity, what is the modernity of today?” (Bourriaud, 2009).
While this might be true, it does not provide enough valid support for my arguments in this paper, as it lacks both material, and discussions of technology and marketing.

PERFORMATISM
Raoul Eshelman is another theorist who claims that postmodernism is on the way out, and in place of it, we find ‘performatism’, a theory rooted in Eric Gans’ generative anthropology and the philosophy of monism, but focused on ‘old’ media (Kirby, 2010a). In his book, entitled ‘Performatism, or the End of Postmodernism’, he defines performatism as, “Performatism may be defined most simply as an epoch in which a unified concept of sign and strategies of closure have begun to compete directly with – and displace – the split concept of sign and the strategies of boundary transgression typical of postmodernism.” (Eshelman: 1). In simpler terms:

“A performatist subject is aware of limitations yet acts anyway. A postmodernist may also be aware of limitations, but the approach to life is much more likely to be suspicious and ironic. The performatist is unhindered by those fallibilities (limits of knowledge, lack of appropriate skills or debilitating attributes) because he or she chooses to act because the act itself is identical in meaning with the person acting (the act is no longer a sign that creates or generates meaning - the meaning is in the act)” (Sweeney, 2007).

While this is an interesting theory, and even one that could be linked to digimodernism (the interactive adverts and film trailers that I will come discuss are a good example of the meaning being in the act), Eshelman concentrates on the old media, and rarely discusses any new.

HYPERMODERNITY
As I’ve said, I will use Robert Samuel as one of my major sources, yet it was a close call between him and Gilles Lipovetsky. Gilles Lipovetsky describes his theory of ‘hypermodernity’ in more sociological terms than that of Bourriaud or Eshelmann (Lipovetsky, cited in Kirby, 2010a; Lipovetsky, 2005);
“The ‘post’ of postmodern still directed people’s attentions to a past that was assumed to be dead; it suggested that something had disappeared without specifying what was becoming of us as a result ... The climate of epilogue is being followed by the awareness of a headlong rush forwards, of unbridled modernization. The epoch of postmodernity is now ended.”

He sees hypermodernity emerging as society enters into the age of ‘hyper’, characterized by hyperconsumption (the third phase of consumption), hypermodernity (which follows postmodernity) and hypernarcissism (Kirby, 2009: 41). Lipovetsky claims that we are living in a fluid society, one that is changing so quickly that it is meaningless to look back on our past to try to understand it, but that ultimately, the maximisation of modernity is today being experienced across a society dominated by hyperconsumption (Lipovetsky, 2005; 23). While this is to some extent similar to digimodernism (that is to say; the fluidity and hyperconsumption of hypermodernism can be equated to the new power and abilities of the digimodern consumer), technology – in terms of computerisation – is not readily discussed, suggesting instead that hypermodernity is of a social and historical quality, not technological, which, needless to say, does not give me the substantiation for my claims in this paper.

FURTHER THEORY

As mentioned, throughout the paper I refer to other theorists in order to validate my arguments and provide support for my overall claims. Quite often, I refer to certain papers which focus on postmodern marketing theory, where the authors discus changes that are taking place in society but do so using a postmodern frame. In these cases, I use these papers together with digimodern theory to argue that society has changed to such an extent, that it is illogical to continue to view it from a postmodern perspective. For example, as Firat and Dholakia say (2004: 152; 195-198):

“As different post-consumer communities (re) (de)construct their modes of being, marketing will have to exhibit a fluid resilience in adapting to these changing modes. The role of technology, especially, infotainment technologies, in enabling these transformations is paramount.”
Or from Geoff Simmons’ paper (2008: 305);

“The Internet has emerged as the virtual glue, which many people in postmodern societies are using to bond together in an increasingly fragmented world. A plethora of online tribal communities have developed, based upon four essential elements identified by Johnson and Ambrose (2006): people, purposes, protocols and technology.”

Both recognise and acknowledge the presence and significance of technology for the postmodern consumer, but both still refer to society as being postmodern, which, as this paper will argue, is no longer strictly true. Being able to look past the postmodern perspective, and being willing to be open to the possibility that society has begun to ‘move on’, gives us a fresh perspective on society; a digimodernist perspective.

Other theorists and authors from the ‘postmodern camp’ I will refer to are A. Fuat Firat, Nikhil Dholakia, Alladi Venkatesh, Stephan Brown, Addis, and Stefano Podestà. Philip Kotler and Hermawan Kartajaya provide a particularly interesting paper. Kotler could be said to be the ‘grand-daddy’ of marketing, and provided us with ‘Kotlerite’ (Brown, 2002 – see Long Life to Marketing Research) models and theories that are still used in today’s marketing; models and theories that are highly modernistic, and far out of place in today’s society. However, his (and Kartajaya) new book, ‘Marketing 3.0; Values-Driven Marketing’ addresses this issue, and surprisingly acknowledges how pivotal the consumer is in today’s marketing (2010; 2).

These theorists demonstrate how there is a general feeling of unease in the marketing world. They recognise that the postmodern consumer can not be reached with the established Kotlerite marketing methods, and that changes in technology are having an effect on consumers, society and marketing.
EMPIRICAL RESEARCH METHOD

With my choice of theory in place, and a hypothesis to prove, I decided to hold a focus group. This would provide me with invaluable data and insights that I could then analyse and use as sound, genuine data in the deliberations surrounding my case. This data could then be juxtaposed with my theory and hypothesis, in order to form my conclusion.

The focus group was chosen over individual interviews (i.e. qualitative over quantitative) for a number of reasons\(^8\), but primarily because of the following reasons:

- **Synergism** – a wider bank of data emerges through the group interaction
- **Snowballing** – the statements of one respondent initiate a chain reaction of additional comments
- **Stimulation** – the group discussion generates excitement about a topic
- **Security** –the group provides a comfort and encourages candid responses
- **Spontaneity** – because participants are not required to answer every question, their responses are more spontaneous and genuine

(Schumm, Sinagub & Vaughn, 1996: 45)

Furthermore, there were a number of cases I wanted to show the interviewees, cases that I hoped would provoke discussion, which would hopefully enable me to examine not only what people think but how they think and why they think that way (Schumm, Sinagub & Vaughn, 1996: 17).

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\(^8\) Further reasons than those mentioned here, and a detailed discussion regarding my choice of empirical method can be found under the section Methodical Considerations
The cases were accompanied by discussion led by open questions, which enabled me, through the analysis, to gain insights into a mix of consumer’s media usage, and views on advertising in today’s society. These insights provided me with the valid empirical research I needed in order to justifiably address my theory and hypothesis, thereby enabling me to draw a legitimate conclusion.

**WRITING STYLE**

Finally, a word on the style of this paper. I have chosen to adopt a slightly more informal turn of phrase throughout this paper, partly because it’s easier to read, and partly because, in light of the subject matter, strict, institutional and highly academic language seems out of place. In the digimodern age, where we are all connected, where information is democratised, and where modernism is defunct, openness, transparency, and equality rules. I write this paper as I would explain it to a friend. To make my point clear, I will quote Stephan Brown (2002);

"...writing in a ‘scientific’ manner isn’t the only way of writing about marketing. There is no law that says marketing discourse must be as-dry-as-dust, though a perusal of the principal academic journals might lead one to think otherwise."

I quite agree.
DIGIMODERNISM

It is in this, and the following sections, that I will discuss and examine digimodernism theory; where it has come from, why it exists, and what, exactly, it is. This is my main theoretical segment of this paper which will be divided up in to smaller sections so as to provide an easier read which will in turn make for a better understanding of the theory and its origins.

I begin with a brief examination of postmodernism and the postmodern consumer, and then move on to more detailed description of digimodernism and what typifies the digimodern consumer. Discussing the paradigms in this way is not only chronological and logical, but also emphasises the claim that digimodernism does not signal a clean break from postmodernism. It will become clear through reading about the two paradigms that while digimodernism contains many of the defining traits of postmodernism, it also embodies unique characteristics that make it quite clearly distinguishable from postmodernism.

Once the two paradigms have been discussed, I will take a quick look at the blurred line between the two. There are many situations, especially in recent years, where postmodern theory and theorists have described digimodernism, digimodern situations, and even the digimodern consumer, yet still place them under postmodernism. While this might be strictly true (as we have not fully left the paradigm), it will become apparent that digimodernism is a better suited depiction of both the consumer and moment in time. In this section, I will highlight some of these situations in order to show that while the two are clearly interrelated, postmodernism can no longer claim supremacy.

After all this theory, I will then go on to present my empirical research; the focus group and analysis.

POSTMODERNISM; FROM WHERE ARE WE COMING?

Postmodernism grew out of modernist society, dominated by metanarratives and an absolute truth (Firat & Venkatesh 1995: 242), and created, as Brown says, “a world of unexpected, unpredictable, uncontrollable, unremitting; some would say unnecessary, upheaval” (2006: 213). A
world where Addis and Podesta (2005 cited in Simmons 2008: 299) saw society as being ruled by the four Cs of change, complexity, chaos, and contradiction. Out of this unstable society, Firat & Venkatesh (1995: 252-255) posited that certain definitive tenets of the postmodern market had emerged; ‘fragmentation’, ‘hyperreality’, ‘the decentred subject’, and ‘reversal of production and consumption’. These conditions create the possibility for ‘juxtapositions of opposites’ which (Dholakia, Firat & Venkatesh 1995: 42) presents to consumers the ability to “(re)present different (self-)images in fragmented moments thereby liberating them from the somewhat modernistic conformity of a single, continuous and consistent image throughout life; a liberation the postmodern generation seemed to long for”. Postmodern society is one of relentless change, where the solid foundations of science and belief that modernism clung to no longer exist (Dholakia, Firat & Venkatesh 1995: 1); instead society is irrational, prone to change, and “[w]hat in modernist sensibility would be considered disjointed, paradoxical and inconsistent, hence schizophrenic and pathological, is not so considered in postmodern sensibility” (Dholakia, Firat & Venkatesh 1995: 43).

It could be argued that a further ‘C’ could perhaps be added to those of Addis and Podesta, that of ‘consumerism’. The postmodern fragmented consumer is inundated with a plethora of advertisements and media, resulting in postmodern condition being most conspicuous in marketing (Brown, 1993; Firat & Venkatesh, 1993, cited in Christensen, Firat & Torp, 2005). While modernism claimed the consumer as king (Cova 1996: 497), postmodernism “elevates consumption to a level on par with production, where consuming is also viewed as a value-producing activity” (Firat & Venkatesh 1995: 242). This ‘new breed’ of fragmented, perceptive consumers living in a postmodern world, constantly consuming and producing, has resulted in marketing and postmodernity becoming “so intertwined that it is no longer possible to treat the two subjects at arm’s length or as peripherally-related topics” (Dholakia, Firat & Venkatesh 1995: 53); postmodernity is consumerism, and consumerism is postmodernity.

THE POSTMODERN CONSUMER

Firat and Venkatesh (1995: 255) believe that the postmodern conditions of fragmentation and decenteredness best describe the postmodern consumer. A fragmented and decentred consumer presents a “jigsaw collage of multiple representations of selves and preferences even when
approaching the same product category” (Proctor & Kitchen 2002: 148) and are, “unambiguously defined by their occupation, social class, demographics etc” (Proctor & Kitchen 2002: 149). As previously stated, these conditions lead to juxtapositions of opposites, which essentially leave the marketer with a frivolous and splintered consumer, eager to tend to each, with an identical amount of enthusiasm, of their fluid, indefinable identities, identities which are switched between for reasons only known to that consumer.

They are represented as, “…restless, cynical, world weary, self obsessed hedonists demanding instant gratification and ever-increasing doses of stimulation . . . and a moronic inferno of narcissists cretinized by television” (Lasch, 1978; Callinicos, 1989; cited in Brown, 1994: 36). They have been able to leave behind the certainties and uniformities of the modern era – where mass production produced mass marketing which produced mass consumption which produced mass production – and instead thrive on individualism, instability and fluidity; all defining aspects of the postmodern epoch (Brown 2006: 215). The postmodern consumers are empowered, multiple, and fickle; and, as Brown writes, “...wise to the wiles of marketers. They possess a ‘marketing reflex’, an inbuilt early warning system that detects incoming commercial messages, no matter how subtle, and automatically neutralises them” (2003: 37).

Some authors (Kirby, 2009: 2/6 & Kirby 2010b; Kotler & Kartajaya 2010: 1; Ogneva, Chan & Morgan, 2010: 2) attribute this to the rise of the internet, and the democratisation of information (Adelson, 2008), enabling consumers to ‘see through’ advertisements, understanding the whys and hows, and as will become evident in the following sections, it is around this point where the postmodern consumer, becomes the digimodern consumer.

**DIGIMODERNISM; WHERE ARE WE GOING?**

Once again, I use the quote; “The world has changed and theory must change with it” (Kirby, 2009: 32). It's a simple quote, but one that I feel can not be contested. The world has changed, and it would be ignorant of us to think that the same theory from 20 years ago can be applied in a world which has changed so dramatically in those 20 years.
So how has the world changed? In their book from 2000, Stan Davis and Christopher Meyer discuss how the elements of connectivity, speed and intangibles will merge together to form a ‘blur’, a super connected world where “[e]verything is...electronically connected to everything else: products, people, companies, countries, everything (2000: 5)”. They discuss how technology has changed, and will change, the world in which we live, and state; “Think of telephones running on the Net, rather than the Net running on the phone system! (2000: 9)” Today, the idea of telephones running on the net is very much a reality with Skype and more recently the introduction of Google Voice, and the exclamation mark indicating a sense of wonder in Davis and Meyer’s quote seems oddly out of place. Yes, the world has changed, and for a very large part, we have technology to thank for it.

As the Gutenberg press transformed the world (Firat & Dholakia, 2004: 140), moving cloistered knowledge into public spaces, and as the introduction of the telephone altered the spatial and geographical framework of interpersonal communication (Hutchby, 2001: 173), so the internet has had similar effects today. It has surpassed our wildest imaginations (not to mention Newsweek’s expectations), giving us access to more information that we could ever use in a lifetime, information we can access virtually (no pun intended) anywhere, and at anytime. It has changed the way we live our lives, the way we work, socialise, shop, meet people and very simply; communicate. Wireless access is the norm, and Facebook recently gained its 500 millionth active user (Facebook, 2010) making it the third largest country in the world (Solis, 2010). It’s true to say that “digital media and networks have become embedded in our everyday lives (Mizuko, 2007).” When Andy Warhol said his now legendary sentence of, ‘In the future everyone will be famous for fifteen minutes’ I doubt he could have realised the magnitude of his statement, but today, perhaps it’s more appropriate to say we’re seeking our 15MB of fame (Envision, 2010; 73).

But it’s not just the internet; “...computerization has restructured or will restructure every form of textuality we know. It is not limited to online network culture” (Kirby, date unknown). The iPhone revolutionised mobiles, paving the way for smartphones (Farber, 2007); television and radio have gone ‘digital’, with many countries phasing out analogue for good (Switch Help), giving us the ability to fast forward through adverts (nearly 90% of us doing just that (Plunkett, 2010), and pause live television; we interact with reality or interactive television programmes through the
push of a button or simply by sending an SMS, immediately giving us a new form of control – authorship – over the programme; computer generated effects (CGI) has allowed us to see, rendered in incredible detail, almost anything you choose to; from the beautiful world of Pandora\textsuperscript{9} to the terrifying jaws of a Tyrannosaurus rex in Jurassic Park; iPods and other MP3 players give us the power to control what we want to hear, in what order we want to hear, and when – even when in extremely public places we can be ‘alone’ (Samuels, 2010: 20). The purely spectacular function of television, or passive ‘use’ of media, is fast becoming outmoded. We are no longer just a ‘recipient’, but just as much an ‘author’ as those who ‘made’ the original text (be it programme, music etc); “the ‘text’ is characterised both by its hyper-ephemerality and by its instability. It is made up by the ‘viewer’, if not in its content then in its sequence (Kirby, 2010b).” The ‘society of the spectacle’, announced by Debord in 1967 (libcom.org) and heralded as a defining feature of postmodernism by Firat and Venkatesh (1995: 250), no longer holds true. We participate constantly, we do not simply watch. The simplest example of this are programmes such as ‘The X-Factor’ or ‘Big Brother’ (Samuels, 2008: 234), both programmes which require active participation from the viewers in order to progress. Another example would be ‘Last Call’ by 13\textsuperscript{th} Street, the first interactive theatrical trailer\textsuperscript{10}.

\textsuperscript{9} From the film ‘Avatar’, a film which itself plays upon the possibilities given to us through technology
\textsuperscript{10} Please see USB for video
“In regular horror movies, the viewers’ role is always the same. With 13th Street, the horror film becomes an interactive thrill. The viewers play their own part and are able to communicate with the protagonist. Therefore, we developed a software that allows for such a dialogue via voice recognition. A flyer invites viewers to send their phone number to a speed dial database, the software selects an audience member and phones him or her.
Then, through voice recognition, a dialogue between viewer and protagonist takes place. The answers are converted into commands and the software plays out the corresponding scene. Because of this, each caller creates a different film.”

The extreme ways in which technology has altered our lifestyles is seen as having such a pronounced effect on society that Alan Kirby argues we are beginning the shift in to a new cultural paradigm. He calls this shift, digimodernism.
As Firat, Venkatesh (1995: 239) and Jencks (cited in Firat & Venkatesh 1995: 239) agreed that postmodernism should be recognised as a radical extension of modernism, Kirby too holds that digimodernism should not be conceived of as a direct substitute for postmodernism (2009: 2). He does, however, present the argument that the roots of digimodernism can be traced back through the years dominated by postmodernism (Kirby, 2009b). In postmodernism, he says, “one read, watched, listened, as before. In digimodernism one phones, clicks, presses, surfs, chooses, moves, downloads” (Kirby, 2009b). Digimodernism is, in the simplest terms, quite simply a continuation of postmodernism. It is a new form of textuality (Kirby, 2009: 50), it is “another stage within modernity, a shift from one phase of history into another” (2009: 2).

The diagram below demonstrates in a simplified form the progression from one paradigm to another; the dotted lines are representative of the lack of definite beginnings and ends to each paradigm, and the curved lines of each ‘paradigm’ reflect their ‘intensity’. Digimodernism, then, is pictured as being the phases that sits ‘between’ postmodernism and the future paradigm we will find ourselves in.
The claim that postmodernism is ‘over’ is, as mentioned previously, nothing new. As far back as 1977, Nottingham Trent University sociologist Mike Featherstone quotes a newspaper announcing in August 1977 that “postmodernism is dead” and that “post-postmodernism is now the thing” (Kirby, 2010a). Jean-Michel Rabaté, professor of English and comparative literature at the University of Pennsylvania, says the term is “now almost completely discarded” (Kirby, 2010a) for him. Yet as said, Kirby – and I concur – argues that it is not ‘dead’, but it is in a phase of transition; as Ernst Breisach observed in 2003, “postmodernism has been, for some time now, in the aftermath of its creative period.” (Kirby, 2009: 7).

When Firat and Venkatesh (1995: 251-255) first discussed their postmodern traits of hyperreality, fragmentation, reversal of production and consumption, decentred subjects and juxtaposition of opposites in 1995 the internet (as we know it; that is to say it had a user interface) was but a year old (Chapman, 2009), yet this represented digimodernism’s baby-steps. Kirby acknowledges digimodernism’s first impact, albeit a slight one, as happening in the late 1990s or early 2000s;

“[Somewhere in this period] the emergence of new technologies re-structured the nature of the author, the reader and the text, and the relationships between them. Postmodernism, like modernism and romanticism before it, fetishised the author. But the culture we have now fetishises the recipient of the text to the degree that they become a partial or whole author of it” (Kirby, 2010a).

I am not claiming, and neither, I believe, is Kirby, that these quintessential postmodern characteristics are misplaced, and should in fact be considered digimodern, but rather that they have become amplified through technology11. Postmodern society is, as Venkatesh noted, one dominated by the media (cited in Goulding, 2003: 156), and made up of consumers who, “just want a better way to interact with marketers. Smarter, technologically empowered, time-starved consumers want marketing that shows more respect for their time and attention. Until we get

11 This will be discussed in more detail under ‘The Blurred Edges’.
better at engaging consumers, they’re going to continue to push back and resist what advertisers are trying to deliver to them” (Kaplan, 2005). What happened in the mid-1990s with the introduction of the internet was the means by which these consumers became smarter and technologically empowered; at that time, the power balance between consumer and producer suddenly shook, and the author/reader relationship began to change (Kirby, 2009: 2/6 & Kirby 2010b; Kotler & Kartajaya 2010: 1).

As the 13th Street trailer demonstrated, technology now enables the viewer to become the author, creating, in perhaps the ultimate reversal of consumption/production, their personalised movie. As Kirby says (2010b); “You click, you punch the keys, you are ‘involved’, engulfed, deciding. You are the text, there is no-one else, no ‘author’; there is nowhere else, no other time or place. You are free: you are the text: the text is superseded.”

In 1977, Roland Barthes declared that “the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author” (Howard), in an age of digimodernism, this role is restored through the pluralisation of the author and the constant, anonymous, consumption/production cycle (Kirby, 2009: 60).

Digimodernism represents the impact of cultural forms of computerisation, “a cultural shift, a communicative revolution, a social organisation” (Kirby, 2009: 50), but it is a revolution that will take time to fully come about. Where modernity saw technology as a tool or something to be controlled by a subject, this relationship between subject and object is now reversed. For example, in a computer game, the object on the screen moves around while the subject sits in their chair, motionless bar the movement of hands or fingers (Samuels, 2010: 22).

Henry Jenkins, Professor of Communication, Journalism, and Cinematic Arts at the University of Southern California, has noted how each important paradigm shift in society is based on a burst of technological change and a slow period of adjustment (Jenkins, 2006). He claims that “[w]e are in the midst of a period of prolonged and profound technological change.” Firat and Dholakia acknowledge that (2004: 124);
“[T]wo major forces are contributing to what may be epochal changes in contemporary human history: unprecedented developments in several technologies and watershed transformations in culture. Technology-driven electronic methods of communicating and transacting are aiding and accelerating these ongoing cultural transformations, as well as being affected by them.”

This period of technological change, this watershed transformation of culture; this, is digimodernism.

THE DIGIMODERN CONSUMER

Digimodernism has affected the consumer in two major ways. I have spoken at length about one of these, that of media consumption; i.e. the way in which we watch television, the way we use our mobile phones, etc, and I won’t go in to more detail here. The second is that due to technology becoming more and more integrated in our lives, we have gained the ability to be active, demanding, experience seeking, knowledgeable and channel-hopping (Stuart-Menteth, Wilson & Baker, 2006: 415). We are witnessing the vanishing of the line between user and product; humanism temporarily survived the era of electronic media only through the act of turning on a device. The knob or switch is like the cover of a book; you open it, and close it. But when media become so entwined with life, it becomes hard to see where we begin, and our media end. As William Gibson (cited in Morgan 2010) puts it; “One of the things our grandchildren will find quaintest about us is that we distinguish the digital from the real... In the future, that will become literally impossible.”

It has been said there is a generation gap, roughly separating people before and after 1980 (Kirby, 2010b), those being born after, and being raised with technology such as the internet, being known as ‘digital natives’ (Filloux, 2010). These digital natives are, as has been mentioned in the postmodern consumer, wise to the acts of marketers and corporations. Trust in media, politicians or brands is at an all time low, with their circle of friends – in most cases on Facebook – acting as their trusted source of information (Filloux, 2010), in fact, people are so convinced of the value of peer networks that they will trust the advice of a total stranger over that of a professional marketer (Gillin 2007: xiv). Companies have lost control – over their workforce, their customers, and as a result, their brands. Or, more precisely – what they are actually forced to give
up now is their need for control (Leberecht, 2010). Needless to say, this has strong repercussions on the marketing world. Ultimately, digimodernism has ‘flattened’ marketing; consumers are not only aware of the tricks and techniques of marketing, but they are also part of the mix, or the entire process. Whether it be through social media, campaigns, or through crowdsourcing adverts; consumers are involved.

In their 2009 paper, Bernard and Veronique Cova discuss the changing face of the consumer, and the marketing methods that have evolved simultaneously with them. Over the past 20 years, out of around 100 new proposed new marketing approaches, they found three dominant approaches to marketing together with three new consumer faces (Cova & Cova, 2009: 90). These are summed up in the table on the following page:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>New marketing approach</th>
<th>Face of the new consumer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early 1990s</td>
<td><strong>Relationship marketing</strong></td>
<td>Individualistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ One-to-one marketing, Interactive marketing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christopher, Payne and Ballantyne 1992 (338); McKenna, 1991</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(181); Peppers and Rogers, 1993 (435); Pine II, 1992 (1043)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late 1990s – Early 2000s</td>
<td><strong>Experiential marketing</strong></td>
<td>Hedonistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ Sensory marketing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Schmitt, 1999 (226); Pine II and Gilmore, 1999 (549)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-2000s onwards</td>
<td><strong>Collaborative marketing</strong></td>
<td>Creative</td>
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<td></td>
<td>+ Marketing 2.0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004 (501); Vargo and Lusch, 2004</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(637)</td>
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</tbody>
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It is far beyond the limits of this paper to cover all the new marketing approaches. Many, if not all, place the emphasis on the consumer, relationships, and value. Value-driven marketing (Kotler & Kartajaya, 2010: 2), tribal marketing (Cova & Cova, 2002: 595), relationship driven marketing (Eiriz & Wilson, 2006: 275), experimental marketing (Schmitt, 1999: 53), all veer away from traditional marketing methods, and recognise the creative consumer as mentioned in the table above, by Cova and Cova. As Kotler and Kartajaya state (Kotler & Kartajaya, 2010: 6); “Consumers’ sophistication generates the future market: the creative consumer market.”
Scott McNealy, CEO of Sun Microsystems, says that, “we have moved beyond the information age to the age of participation” (cited in Kotler & Kartajaya, 2010: 3). The marketing world is quickly realising that product alone is not enough, and intangibles are being catapulted from playing simply a supporting role, in to being the new ‘product’. Service, brand, trust and relationships are just a few of the intangibles that have helped emotional value essentially become an actual currency (Davis and Meyer 2000: 70), and this new ‘currency’ means that companies have to focus on emotions, more humanistic elements, in order to stand out, and capture consumer’s attention and trust. Customers are seeking out relationships that go beyond the transactional, they expect brands to “offer engagement and collaboration models that match the more distributed and multi-layered mechanisms of value creation through social media” (Leberecht, 2010).

In this age, people create, they take part; they don’t just consume (Kotler & Kartajaya 2010: 3). It’s not viable to draw up a marketing plan at the start of the year, and execute it over that year (Shiffman 2008 cited in Groom 2008: 3); consumers are too changeable, and the marketplace too volatile for a traditional marketing plan. Lusch and Vargo (2006 cited in Badot & Cova 2008: 213) saw the customer as being a co-creator of value (or producer), and saw marketing as shifting from a ‘market to’ philosophy, to a ‘market with’ philosophy, where the consumer and whole supply chain are collaborators in the marketing process. Yet this shift, they said, “towards co-creation will require a genuine marketing revolution” (Badot & Cova 2008: 213), and although we are seeing the beginnings of this revolution, getting it right will take time. To exemplify this point, I will use the example of crowdsourcing, one of many ways in which companies and organisations have given up control, and let consumers take a central role.

CROWDSOURCING

Crowdsourcing was coined by Jeff Howe in a June 2006 Wired magazine article (Howe, 2006). In a nutshell, it’s “the act of taking a job traditionally performed by a designated agent (usually an employee) and outsourcing it to an undefined, generally large group of people in the form of an open call” (Condron, 2010). Crowdsourcing websites, where a company – anyone – can upload a task, state what they need, what the reward is, and then let the world try to solve that task, abound; http://www.poptent.net/, http://www.redesignme.com/,
http://www.chaordix.com/ and http://namethis.com/name_this/, to name just a few. There even exists an entire advertising agency solely built on crowdsourcing principles; https://victorsandspoils.com/. As Cliff Lewis, Executive Producer and Creative Resource Director at Agency Nil, says (Liebling, 2009):

“Crowdsourcing is the new creative mantra... The perception is that the crowd will give you the answer at a fraction of the cost. That may well turn out to be the case – occasionally and for the right task. I don’t believe the crowd will always get it right but I do think the crowd has an important role when used correctly. It forces agencies into a new era of real collaboration and to re-evaluate their process and their value.”

Big brands have made use of crowdsourcing; those mentioned in my hypothesis (Peperami, Heinz, Mountain Dew and Ford) are just a handful of brands that have reached out to the crowd, launching competitions to create their next advert, or ‘just’ to gather feedback and suggestions from those who actually consume the product (such as mystarbucksidea.force.com). Whether it is to make an advert, to gather ideas, to redesign logos, or to constantly update software, crowdsourcing is reaching out to the consumer; the once passive, obedient, receptor, and asking them; what do you think?

Yet is this always a good idea? Is the crowd really as creative as the creatives inside an agency? Henry Ford once said on being asked about inventing the automobile, “If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses” (Hohmann, 2005). Quite often, people don’t know what they want, but just what they don’t want (Proctor & Kitchen, 2002; 145), which, understandably, can lead to problems in regards to creativity. Further more, all of the examples listed have run in to problems. Heinz and Peperami were not only accused for looking for cheap labour and being lazy, but also faced the overwhelming task of shifting through thousands of entries (Story, 2007 & and Charles, 2009). To top things off, the winners of the Peperami competition were advertising executives, their advert being produced by a marketing company (Sweney, 2010).
Time will tell whether or not crowdsourcing is a realistic option when it comes to marketing; it makes use of the consumers, but at what cost?

“The traditional customer is the one we all were as recently as a decade ago. We bought products and services and based our decisions on utility and price. We communicated with the companies we were dealing with by letter, phone call, and occasionally email, if they had the facility to do that. But that customer changed because of a social change in the early part of the millennium. The customer seized control of the business ecosystem and it was never the same.” (Paul Greenberg, in Morgan 2010)
THE BLURRED EDGES

It will probably have become apparent that there are many aspects of postmodernism and digimodernism that seem to overlap and it is those aspects I will now briefly address. Some of them are merely overlap, as it is not the grand ‘end of postmodernism’; others, I will argue, are misnomers; I will come to argue that by placing them under the ‘title’ of digimodern, the need for such a grand revolution (Badot & Cova 2008: 213) would be lessened. By recognising that we are no longer so firmly placed in postmodernism, marketing theory would be able to take the much needed evolitional steps forward.

As previously said, Kirby states that it was somewhere in the 1990s/early 2000s that new technologies re-structured the relationships between author, reader and text, (Kirby, 2010b) and that the first decade of this century can be seen as ‘early digimodernist’ (Kirby 2009: 6). It is also around the mid- to late-1990s12, that many postmodern/postmodern marketing theorists and texts bring to light the fact that marketing is in need of a revolution due to changes in society and the consumer (Brown, 1997, 2002; Smithee, 1997, cited in Addis & Podestà, 2005). More than once they state that marketing seems to have become caught up in the modernistic frame in which it was created, and is unable to adapt to the postmodern consumer and society it should now be addressing. The modern marketing ‘Kotlerisms’ (Badot & Cova 2008: 206) of analysis, planning, implementation, and control have become inadequate and marketers have had to wake up to the fact that consumers have evolved to the point of being ‘co-creators’; “no longer passive targets but creative partners in the production of experiences and identities” (Christensen, Firat & Torp 2005: 159). It is the postmodernism tenant of the reversal of production and consumption that acts as one of the major indications of digimodernism.

12 Please do note (as a point of interest) that all the sources in this section (and indeed many throughout the paper) that refer to postmodernism or the postmodern consumer, all date from the mid- to late- nineties, and the first decade of this century.
CONSIDERING THE KNOWLEDGE THE CONSUMER HAS OF THE MARKETPLACE (Dholakia, Firat & Venkatesh 1995: 53), and the ‘marketing reflex’ (Brown, 2003: 37) they now boast, the postmodern consumer is more than able to participate in the control of marketing messages, and will no longer simply reproduce those that are marketed to them in the traditional manner. Ultimately, “the consumer is a producer and what s/he chooses to consumer is for the purpose of producing something” (Dholakia, Firat, & Venkatesh, 1995: 260). This ‘something’, Firat and Venkatesh go on to note (1995: 254), is a “certain type of human being”. Lusch and Vargo (2006 cited in Badot & Cova 2008: 213) also saw the customer as being a co-creator of value (or producer), and believed marketing to be shifting from a ‘market to’ philosophy, to a ‘market with’ philosophy, where the consumer and whole supply chain are collaborators in the marketing process. Yet this shift, they said, “towards co-creation will require a genuine marketing revolution” (Badot & Cova 2008: 213).

This fundamental shift in the relationship between the traditional customer and companies is driven by technology, specifically, the social web; it is here to stay, and is the biggest shift yet in the history of business (Ogneva, Chan & Morgan, 2010: 2).

Balasubramanian et al. (2001, in Simmons, 2008) also acknowledges the fact that the internet has put power in the hands of the consumer, allowing for customisation, and for them “to have a say in the online creation of product and service experiences, which are tailored to their individualised needs.” Companies must begin to collaborate instead of just producing. They are no longer at the front of the value chain, and consumers are no longer at the end; there is no real value chain as such (Firat & Dholakia, 2004: 135). As previously discussed, the consumer has become a producer as Firat and Venkatesh contested, but this is on a level unforeseen. It is no longer simply methods of personalisation enabled through the internet (e.g. design your own trainers on Nike.com), but of crowdsourcing, co-creation, collaboration. The consumer quite easily switches from consumer to integral part of the production though, for example, helping to create a logo, a piece of music, a working part, and so on. As Firat and Dholakia point out (2004: 134), if the lines between consumer and producer have become so blurred, where do organisations end and consumers begin? “The changing nature of the consumer and the concomitant restructuring of relations between the
organization and its consumers will force us to re-examine the modern concept of an organization and its distinct, bounded form” (Firat & Dholakia, 2004: 143). The same can also be argued of marketing as if the consumer is part-producer, then this would also put the consumer in the role of the marketer; “Marketing becomes everyone’s activity, and the post-consumer is a marketer, constantly involved in the imagination, creation, and performance of desires to be experienced as modes of living” (Firat & Dholakia, 2004: 140). As Brian Solis so eloquently puts it, “nowadays participation is marketing” (Solis, 2008: 6) and it is this revolution that marketing must address.

It is not just the postmodern tenant of reversal of production and consumption that is seen in digimodernism; technology has had a remarkable effect on most of them, and they can be seen reflected in the digimodern traits that Kirby discusses (2009: 52-53)

- **Onwardness** – the digimodern text is growing, rolling, incomplete; there is a start, but no end.
- **Haphazardness** – as a consequence of onwardness, the future development of the text is undecided.
- **Evanesence** – the digimodern text it is technically very hard to capture and archive.
- **Reformulation and intermediation of textual roles** – the digimodernist text’s radical redefinition of textual functional titles: reader, author, viewer, producer, director, listener, presenter, writer.
- **Anonymous, multiple and social authorship** – authorship becomes multiple, almost innumerable.
- **The fluid-bounded text** – the digimodernist text so lacks the quality of traditional physical limits so much so that traditionalists may not recognise it as a text at all. Such a text may be endless or swamp any act of reception/consumption.
- **Electronic-digitality** – in its purest form, the digimodernist text relies on its technological status: it’s the textuality that derives from digitalization; it’s produced by fingers and thumbs, and computerization.
Easy to recognise are fragmentation, hyperreality, decentred subjects (all three are represented in the fluidity, haphazardness and constant change of the digimodern text), and as said, the reversal of production and consumption. Having these present, allow for, as with postmodernism, the juxtaposition of opposites (the author is the reader; the reader is the author and so on).

**INDIVIDUALISM VS. TRIBES**

Another interesting discussion can be had in regards to the debate within postmodernism over individualism. Many theorists (Brown, 2006; Nauman & Hufner, 1985; Lipovetsky, 1983, 1987, 1990 cited in Cova, 1997) claim that postmodernity stands for the triumph of individualism, that each individual is able to represent themselves as they choose, personalising their products, purchases and so forth, thereby becoming unique.

Yet there are just as many – perhaps more – who argue quite the opposite (Bauman, 1992, cited in Cova, 1997; Maffesoli, 1996; Cova, 1997; Kozinets, 2001, 2002; Thompson & Troester, 2002; Dholakia et al., 2004; Johnson & Ambrose, 2006; Cova & Pace, 2006; Cova et al., 2007 cited in Simmons, 2008). In this view, individualism was a short lived period, and that society has “moved away from a more extreme form of individualism, towards a soulful search for more social bonds due to alienation – the phenomenon of neo-tribalism” (Simmons, 2008: 303).

So where as the ‘individualists’ argue that (Simmons, 2008: 305):

“[a]ll instruments invented by science and technology, and particularly electronics, are “anti-link” instruments which are likely to increase the isolation of the individual” (Cova, 1997: 305). The ‘tribalists’ argue that, “[t]he Internet has emerged as the virtual glue, which many people in postmodern societies are using to bond together in an increasingly fragmented world.”
It could be argued that postmodernism, in its heyday, did signal the triumph of the individual, however, as the yet-unnamed digimodernism began to appear, this began to change. In other words, as the internet made its grand entrance around 1995 (Chapman, 2009), individualism began to lose its grip, and a sense of tribalism began to gather.

“Thus, instead of seeing individual freedom and mechanized alienation as opposing social forces, contemporary individuals turn to automation in order to express their autonomy, and this bringing together of former opposites results in a radical restructuring of traditional, modern, and postmodern intellectual paradigms”. (Samuels, 2008: 3).

One might argue that social media such as Facebook and MySpace allow for personalisation through different photos, music and layout, these are all still done within preset constraints. Furthermore, when you make a profile on one of these social networks, you are joining a network; “a group or system of interconnected people or things” (oxforddictionaries.com).

In the simplest terms; as postmodernism was individual, digimodern is tribal. Technology, the internet, enabled what first appeared to be individualisation, but soon proved to be tribes, thereby signalling the beginning of the end of the individualistic postmodern era.
**Methodical Considerations in Empirical Research**

Throughout this next main section, I will put the theory of digimodernism and my hypothesis to the test, and through the use of a focus group find out how consumers interact with media, and how they interact and view new, interactive – digimodern – adverts and campaigns. By discussing their use of media, how they consume media, their relationship to technology and/or marketing and finally by discussing different cases, the data gathered will be suitable to compare with the theory already discussed. By doing this, I will be able to demonstrate just how technology is affecting media consumption, and also point out what challenges marketing communications faces in the not-so-distant future.

**Why a Focus Group?**

A focus group was chosen as I am primarily interested in qualitative answers over quantitative; I was eager to hear discussions about the subject matter, rather than just relatively plain, straightforward answers in one-to-one interviews or questionnaires. As Neergaard says (2007: 6); “Qualitative research captures the essence of something; quantitative measures the volume.” A focus group also allows for the discussion to grow organically, taking unforeseen directions and evolving in a way that might provide valuable insights. Of course, this can also be negative if the conversation strays too far from the subject, but as the moderator, I can bring the topic back in to focus using, as Powney says (1988: 12), a “structured eavesdropping” role. The group interaction also allows the individuals to explore and clarify their views in ways that might not have been possible in one-to-one interviews. The method is also particularly useful for exploring people's knowledge and experiences and can be used to examine not only what people think, but how they think and why they think that way (Bolton). Ultimately though, the interaction of the focus group is explicitly used as part of the method; people should be encouraged to talk to one another, asking questions, exchanging anecdotes and commenting on each other's experiences and points of view (Kitzinger, 1994: 112). It has been suggested that focus groups be understood as social enactments (Halkier, 2010: 71), which, it can be almost undeniably argued; they are (Barbour, 2007; Bloor et al., 2001; Halkier, 2002; Morgan, 1997 cited in Halkier 2010: 71). Furthermore, as Halkier points out (2010: 72), “the growing influence of epistemological positions within various forms of social constructivism...where all knowledge is seen as dependent on the social context of its production also points in the direction of actively including the social interaction.” Given the subject of this paper, a focus group seems only appropriate. The digimodern trait
of the reader becoming the author and creating their own content can only be seen through a postmodern social constructivist perspective; “Clearly postmodernism favours the idea of hyperreality that follows from the argument that reality is not something out there but something that more often than not is created. The notion of hyperreal is intended to distinguish it from the modernist notion of reality as uncontested and singular (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995: 257).”

**Scientific Theoretical Base for Empirical Research**

This brings me nicely to my theoretical framework, which is, as said, a social constructivist framework. This postmodern approach is suitable as it moves away from the modernist stance of knowledge as essentialism, and truth as objective (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995: 257), and instead focuses on the interrelations in an interview and the social construction of reality during the interview, in other words; the postmodern disbelief in universal systems of thought (Kvale, 1996: 41), and the constructed matter of truth (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995: 257). “Instead of looking at the human subject in mere cognitive terms, postmodernism considers other possible profiles, such as human beings as communicative subjects guided by language and rational thought (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995: 243)” Immanuel Kant was a forerunner for social constructivism (Hacking, 1999: 41), arguing that we can obtain knowledge about the world, but it will always be subjective knowledge in the sense that it is filtered through human consciousness. Because of this, I must take in to consideration the fact that the information I gather during the focus group will be as a result of social interaction between the group members, and as a response to my questions and choice of cases, which are based on my interests, values and preconceptions. Therefore, the empirical data I will gather can not be seen as a ‘true’ picture of reality, but as a ‘snapshot’ of that moment. As Daymon and Holloway say, objectivity and neutrality are impossible to achieve (Daymon & Holloway, 2004: 89).

**Authenticity and Trustworthiness**

This leads me on to the question of whether or not my research is valid and/or reliable, or as the modern position phrases it; authentic and/or trustworthy (Damon & Holloway p.92). This modern view is based on the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985, 1989, & 1998 cited in Damon & Holloway, 2002: 92), and argues that validity and reliability are characterised by the researcher’s careful documentation of the research process
and the decisions made along the way. Although the same research could be undertaken by someone else, my results can never be duplicated, as I myself have such influence over the data gathered, and the conclusions made (Damon & Holloway, 2002: 90). This, coupled with the social constructivist view, means that I must take in to consideration as much as I can in terms of process in order to have any kind of validity. Trustworthiness has four elements that roughly correspond to internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity. These elements – credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability – assess the quality of the research product for truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 294).

In order to gain credibility, I carried out a member check (Damon & Holloway, 2002: 93), by sending a summary of my findings to the participants, giving them the opportunity to clarify anything I might have misunderstood. The transferability of my study is evident, in that my findings and theories may easily be applied to studies in the future in order, for example, to see how the media consumption of consumers in 10 years differs from those of today. The dependability of my study is shown in the detailed method section, which demonstrates an ‘audit trail’ (Daymon & Holloway, 2004: 94), covering all of my decisions. Finally, the confirmability will become evident through the following analysis of my focus group (Daymon & Holloway, 2004: 94).

Authenticity is closely related to the social constructivist viewpoint in that it recognises and attempts to correct the possible ‘unfairness’ of the situation; my involvement, and the social effects of the setting. In order to balance the situation, my questions\(^\text{13}\) were open, fair, not misleading or judgmental, and provided an honest report of the participants’ ideas (Damon & Holloway, 2002: 93).

\(^{13}\) As Daymon and Holloway note (2002: 195), focus groups are more akin to brainstorm sessions, and therefore having a ‘set’ questionnaire would be inappropriate. Instead, a list of prompting ‘questions’ and topics I hoped to cover acted as my ‘questionnaire’. This is included in appendix 4, p. 159.
METHODICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In order for this focus group to be valid, and to present me with valid data, there are a number of factors regarding my method that must be taken into consideration. I will briefly run through them now.

SELECTION

Random sampling is seldom used in selecting participants for a focus group. The reasons for that, firstly; it would be highly unlikely that such a random sample would accurately represent larger numbers, and secondly; a random sample is unlikely to have a shared perspective on a topic and may not even be able to contribute at all (Morgan, 1997: 45). The term purposeful sampling (Daymon & Holloway, 2004; 159), has been seen as an umbrella term, covering both theoretical and selective sampling (Coyne, 1997, cited in Neergaard, 2007; 259), with the difference between the two being in whether or not the participants were selected before the research (selective), or as it unfolds (theoretical) (Coyne, 1997; 264). In this paper, I am using selective sampling, as I am working within a framework, whereas the theoretical analyst “cannot know in advance precisely what to sample for and where it will lead him” (Glaser, 1978, cited in Coyne, 1997; 264). While it might be argued that I could have used either method in this paper (as if I claim that all consumers are within this new paradigm, then where are my parameters?), I have also chosen to place a slight focus on age. As mentioned in the Digimodernism section, there is a distinction (or so Kirby claims) between those born after 1980 (digital natives) and those born before (digital ‘immigrant’ [my own term]). According to this theory, digital immigrants should not be as accustomed to technological advances or as comfortable consumer media in a digimodern manner as digital natives. Therefore, I aimed to create a focus group with a split of digital natives and digital immigrants, in terms of age. In order to focus on the age, I made sure that all of the participants were from the same ‘background’; i.e. interests, education, job etc. Although most researchers recommend aiming for homogenous groups in order to capitalize on shared experiences (Kitzinger, 1995) it can also be advantages to bring together a diverse group, to maximise exploration. As Morgan said (1997: 72); the objective is “homogeneity in background and not homogeneity in attitudes.”
RECRUITMENT

Some variation exists in the literature with regard to the optimum size for a focus group. Some authors suggest six to ten participants (Morgan 1997) while others have reported using as few as three and as many as fourteen (Pugsley 1996). I had chosen to use six, as it allows me to present an even split of men and women, and also, as I am the sole moderator, is of a size that I can manage and moderate myself.

My next step was to decide upon strangers or friends/colleagues. As Schumm, Sinagub, & Vaughn state (1996: 36) strangers are, as a general rule, preferred as individuals are more likely to discuss issues honestly and readily when they are among people they are unlikely to meet again. In order to do this, I chose to use the method Halkier calls ‘snowball-sampling’ (Halkier 2002; 36); asking people within my network to recommend people in their network who fall in to the category. By asking my network to contact the person they thought suitable with an email I had prepared (appendix 5, p. 161) the participant would feel more comfortable with the situation, and also, as Halkier states, a greater sense of commitment to the project (Halkier 2002; 37).

My six strangers made up a relatively homogenous group (in terms of interests/education/job) but not entirely homogenous (three members are born after 1980). The group was made up of three men, and three women. One of the men is born before 1980, and two after, and two of the women were born before 1980, and one after.

Unfortunately, on the day of the focus group, one of the female participants (born after 1980) did not arrive. I decided to go ahead with the group, as the remaining participants were still representative of my group.
The participants were as follows (name and date of birth, nationality, profession, education):

- **Lise Borgstrøm**
  - 27 (born 1983)
  - Danish
  - Project Manager in advertising
  - MA in Communication

- **Jennie Kaae Ferrara**
  - 32 (born 1978)
  - Danish
  - Translator/proof-reader
  - MA in Modern Culture & Communication

- **Kristina Sedereviciute** (*did not arrive*)
  - 25 (born 1985)
  - Lithuanian
  - Project Manager at Hosting (IT services)
  - MA Corporate Communication

- **Søren Nielsen**
  - 28 (born 1982)
  - Danish
  - Digital Campaign Manager at Vizeum
  - MA in Culture and Communications
• Anders Honoré
  o 37 (born 1973)
  o Danish
  o Tailor
  o Employed at Palads Cinemas

• Kristjan Wager
  o 35 (born 1975)
  o Danish
  o IT consultant
  o Bachelor of Science

LOCATION AND SETTING
The focus group was a relaxed, informal and friendly meeting, and took place in a meeting room at my place of work, Vizeum; a small full-service media company in Copenhagen. The room was ideal, leaving me very little to worry about as it was designed to be quiet, comfortable and light. It is also fitted with the necessary equipment (television, projector etc), and fully furnished. It was the logical choice in terms of convenience, but also logistically. It provided a neutral location for all bar one of the participants, and being located in the city centre, meant that it was easy to reach for the others.

INTRODUCTION TO FOCUS GROUP
The primary goal of my focus group was to assess whether or not digimodernism is present in the participants lives; if their media consumption has changed, and if it is has, has this had any effect on how they, as consumers, view and interact with marketing. The results of this focus group will then be examined against the digimodern theory in order to assess whether or not it can be said that technology has had an significant impact
on media consumption, and the way that consumers view marketing. My ‘secondary goal’ is to evaluate whether or not, as a technologically minded consumer, the date of birth plays a role.

To begin the group, I presented the participants with a small questionnaire (appendix 2, p. 125). This was in order to gain details about their lifestyles and how technologically competent they believed themselves to be. This was more suitable than asking each participant in front of the group, as they might have been affected by the group setting and embarrassed, for example, to answer truthfully. It also gave me more details to work with during the analysis.

**DISCUSSION GUIDE AND SESSION STRUCTURE**

As noted in a previous footnote, focus groups have been described as being more similar to brainstorming than structured discussions due to their unpredictable and interactive nature (Daymon & Holloway, 2004: 195). This would imply that a structured set of questions is unsuitable; instead, a discussion guide provides the loose framework within which to work. This provided me with the topics I wanted to cover, as well as opening questions with which to start discussion. On the guide, I also included timing, so as to make sure I would have time to cover all my points.

I began the session with an informal chat, introductions and some refreshments. This gave the participants a chance to unwind from their day (it was held after work, at 17.30), get acquainted with one another, and also give them 5 minutes to fill out the questionnaire I had provided for them.

To start the group, I asked open questions regarding their media habits, and media consumption. This was to get the group ‘warmed up’. I moved on to a comparison of a magazine advert, one with a QR code, and one with out, discussing which was more appealing, and if they had ever ‘used’ a QR code.
Next, I presented 4 comparisons between a ‘traditional’ advert, and then the interactive version, and a Levis’ social shopping site. After each case, we discussed which was more appealing? Why? Had they made use of them? Would they? Which did they trust more? Why? Etc. A full transcript of the focus group can be found in appendix 3, p.130, together with a CD, and a USB containing the adverts and videos.

CHOICE OF CASES
I chose my cases with the intention of covering not only ‘traditional’ advertising, but also campaign marketing, i.e. for a cause. I also included the Levis’ social shopping example in order to examine how consumers saw this kind of ‘social’ shopping, and if it provided any extra trust. All the cases are based on the theory of digimodernism; that adverts and marketing (among others) are becoming interactive. Whether or not this entices consumers to ‘take part’ is what I hope to find out.

My first case, it could be argued, is the QR code (as explained in the Method). QR codes are found in numerous magazines today, on products from Coca-Cola bottles to billboards and provide extra information for consumers. The next case compares a television advert for Burger King’s chicken burger to their interactive version, Subservient Chicken. Following on from this, I next introduce the Levis’ social shopping concept. By making use of Facebook’s social plugins (embedded code in any website), the site becomes interactive, allowing you to see which of your friends have liked which product, thereby giving, in theory, greater validity to the product – see below.

14 This can be seen in the anti-knife crime adverts, and television license adverts
Next, I chose two campaigns; one anti-knife crime from the United Kingdom and one for television license payment (the television advert from the United Kingdom, and the interactive advert from Sweden). These two cases were discussed as the Burger King; which is more effective, trustworthy, and so on.

In appendix 1, p. 121, you can find a print out of my PowerPoint.
DIGIMODERN MEDIA CONSUMPTION: THE ANALYSIS

The focus group presented me with a great deal of information, some of which was expected, and some quite unexpected. It also provided the basis for further research and focus groups, which would have been extremely interesting and well worth doing, if it were not for a lack of time. However, I will comment further upon this later on in the paper, under Further Research Suggestions.

The goal of the focus group was to find out how consumers consume media, and how they interact and view new, interactive – digimodern – adverts and campaigns. Through a series of examples and discussions, I was able to attain views and opinions that helped form a conclusion to my problem statement of; how does the shift into digimodernism radically alter society, further upsetting the balance between consumer and marketing, and what challenges does this shift present to marketing communications?

As it is commonly known, focus groups can generate vast amounts of data, which can easily overwhelm the moderator, and also cause great confusion when being analysed (Rabiee, 2004; 657). Luckily, my focus group was of a moderate size, and the data gathered, while significant, was not overwhelming. Furthermore, by carefully coding my data using the three steps of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Daymon & Holloway, 2004; 123-124) I was able to form analyst-constructed typologies (Marshall & Rossman 1999; 154-155); comprehensive chunks of information which are, as Marshall and Rossman go on to describe (199; 154-155), “created by the researcher that are grounded in the data but not necessarily used explicitly by participants.” After coding, I ended up with four main categories, which I will now discuss.
MEDIA CONSUMPTION

As a group, it was clear to see that their media habits had changed in the last few years. From television to mobile phones, the ways by which the group consumed media had undergone a revolution; “I don’t own a TV” (Appendix 3, p. 130, l. 27) to “I use my iPhone all the time, to check my email or to go on Facebook” (p. 132, l. 29).

Television consumption proved to have changed dramatically, with one of the group not owing a television (p. 130, l. 27), to one of them, Jennie, being relatively ‘traditional’ (i.e. not watching television online and not downloading) in her television use (p. 131, l. 16), each participant showed different habits, but with the exception of Jennie, all participants showed ‘untraditional’ habits. Anders, (p. 131, l. 9) only used his television for keeping up-to-date with news, Kristjan didn’t own a television (p. 130, l. 27), Søren had recently downsized his television package to the very basics (p. 131, l. 11), and Lise chooses to download the series she follows (p. 131, l. 6). All four participants clearly demonstrate that their television use is not as it used to be. Choosing to get rid of their television or use the internet for their viewing purposes signals impatience in consumers today; why wait when it is available via another medium?

As Christine Rosen argues in Samuel’s book, “The creation and near-universal adoption of the remote control arguably marks the beginning of the era of the personalization of technology. The remote control has shifted power to the individual, and the technologies that have embraced this principle in its wake...have created a world where the individual’s control over the content, style, and timing of what he consumers is nearly absolute” (Samuels, 2010: 23). Although here, in the case of my participants, the power has shifted to the consumers to such an extent that they are able to view what they want, when they want, via another medium entirely. The habit of uploading files (whether they be sound or picture) and making them available for download (more often than not, illegally), is a pure digimodern one; they create the possibility for Rosen’s empowered consumers to turn off their television, or even get rid of it completely, and in doing so, create their own television schedule. As Rosen

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15 As the transcript of the focus group is contained within the same appendix, for the remained of the analysis I will simply write a page and line number, not the appendix number (unless referring to a different appendix).
goes on to say, “...people are increasingly relying on the Internet to gain information, and fewer people are watching television as their primary source for...entertainment” (Samuels, 2010: 199).

Lise exemplifies Rosen’s quote when she mentions how her use of the internet has changed in recent years (p. 133, l. 14-5). It is no longer used as just a source for information, but rather, “for sharing information, and getting inspiration from others, and also for fun, but also sometimes just for business.” While Kristjan tried to distance himself from being overly reliant on the internet, he realised that more and more, he was forced to actively find an internet connection in order to go about daily life (p. 133, l. 11-2). In order to combat this, he became a smartphone user, thus giving himself 24 hour access to the internet, becoming fully coupled with technology, and thereby being ‘digitally dependent’. Lise provides a good quote summarising this dependency (p. 132, l. 29-30); “Yeah well I use my iPhone all the time to check, you know, where am I right now, to check my email or to go on Facebook or Twitter and stuff like that. I have it with me all the time, and carrying it around, almost bring it to the toilet as well, so it’s always there.”

This significant turn towards our lives becoming constantly digitally connected is also demonstrated through the Roskilde Festival example that Søren gives (p. 135, l. 4-8). In this case, festival-goers were able to enter competitions, vote for gigs at the festival, send photos in to the festival’s daily newspaper, and make use of an iPhone application that allowed you to plan your festival, all via your mobile phone. People are able to take part, have their voices heard, and plan – all through the same electronic device. Lise discusses the use of mobile phones during work (); “I’ve tried that in conferences where you respond and at the end everybody’s answers are put up so you can see what everybody thinks – instant feedback kind of thing.”

Mobile phone reliance was furthered through the admittance of all of the participants (p. 133, l. 31) that they have used their phones in order to take part in some kind of activity other than ‘communication’ (e.g. calling, texting, internet, photo taking etc). Whether it was voting for a television programme (such as X-Factor or Big Brother), competitions, or donations to charities, all the participants had used their phones to
carry out a task that would, or could, have actual consequences in day-to-day life (if not for the participants themselves, then for others, e.g. contestants on X-Factor). Kristjan suggested that the action of using your mobile to enter or vote etc, can only be in connection with television (p. 134, l. 20), but Søren counter argued this claim by stating that it is possible to execute this action through outdoor adverts and newspapers (p. 134, l. 27), through, for example, QR codes (p. 136, l. 23). Although everyone knew what they were (p. 135, l. 25), not everyone had actually tried to use one (Lise, p. 135, l. 30); “I’ve seen them at the bus stop, you know, where you got something on your phone if you took a picture of it, but I didn’t try it myself because I found it a little bit difficult to understand what I’m supposed to do. You know, I’m standing at the bus stop and there’s just a big poster, so I’ve just seen it but I didn’t try it.” This is because, as Lise goes on to say (p. 135, l. 30), she didn’t understand what she was supposed to do.

It would appear initially that the participants are fully digital in terms of how television is watched, and how they use the internet, yet there appears to be some discrepancy when it comes to the QR codes.

**EFFORT VS. REWARD**

Although Lise is the only one who admits not being sure of what to do, or how to use, the QR code, all the participants agree during the focus group that they do not understand the benefit of using them (Søren, p. 136, l. 11; Jennie, p. 137, l. 2; Anders; p. 139, l. 27; Kristjan, p. 136, l. 1; Lise, p. 139, l. 14). Søren mentions a case (p. 136, l. 23) where DSB made use of QR codes in a campaign in collaboration with Sonofon, targeting travellers. Posters on the platforms featured a QR code which would take the users to an internet site, where you would answer some easy questions, and in doing so, enter a competition. As Søren says (p. 136, l. 25); “For me it was just a harder way than sending the texts if it had had the question there and then said ‘send the answer to 1213’ that would have been a lot easier, than downloading an app, taking a picture of it or waiting for it to scan, coming to the competition page…” It would appear that in order for QR codes to be used successfully, they must be used for a special purpose; something out of the ordinary. After hearing that scanning the code on the Calvin Klein billboard (Appendix 1, p. 122) takes the user to a YouTube video of their latest advert, Lise replied (p. 139, l. 14), “But that’s a lot of work for a YouTube video. You
know? I’d feel a little bit cheated, like ‘what the fuck? Didn’t I get anything?’” She does add that if she knew the company were known for making original, funny adverts then she might be tempted, “but if it’s just people being naked, then hey, I’ve seen it before” (p. 138, l. 2).

An example of just how they could be used to balance the exchange between consumer and brand is given by Søren (p. 139, l. 4–6). Hennes and Mauritz (H&M) include QR codes on the washing label in some of their clothing. Through scanning the code, the user is taken to the website, where the item is available for purchase, online. So upon admiring your friend’s jacket, you can simply scan the code, and purchase the item in a matter of minutes. As Anders points out (p. 138, l. 14), the feeling of the group is that, “if it makes your life easier you will scan. Not just for fun.”

Anders also brings to light an interesting point regarding consumers’ optional (yet in order to understand; obligatory) participation in decoding the QR codes. He says (p. 150, l. 23-4), “It’s like Calvin Klein – I know they don’t make burgers so I know it’s going to be something with clothes. And if I never really liked Calvin Klein – why bother?” Using QR codes in advertising and/or marketing represent a break from traditional adverts in that they require active participation from the consumer in order to decipher the message. Television, radio and print adverts (for example) do not require the same level of participation. Of course, the device must be switched on, or open, in order to receive the messages, but QR codes require an action from the viewer. It could be argued that this action will only be undertaken if the code is presented by a brand the consumer has a positive established connection with, or if it points towards what it will give the consumer in return (e.g. ‘Scan this code to be taken to the item on our website’, etc). As Anders said, why bother making the effort when you already know you don’t like the brand? As Lise says (p. 138, l. 1); “I mean, if I knew they were making always really funny, crazy, original ads then I probably would, but if it’s just people being naked, then hey, I’ve seen it before.” She does, however, go on to point out that if she knew there was a reason to scan the code, she would (p. 138, l. 8-10); “If I knew it was of some use to me, you know, if I’m reading a ladies magazine, and I’m looking at some shoes, instead of looking in the back and seeing where can I buy it, if there was a barcode there and I could scan it and get the information right away there on my phone, that would be cool.”
This extra effort for a result that could have been reached much quicker and with less participation on behalf of the user became a recurring theme in the focus group, even garnering a maxim of “too much brain-work” (Lise, p. 157, l. 12). This is not confined to QR codes either. In discussing the other cases based on interactive adverts, there were a number of comments (Anders, p. 150, l. 17; Søren, p. 136, l. 26; Lise, p. 141, l. 17) regarding the inconsistency in the exchange between brand and consumer. Although perceived as fun (Kristjan, p. 148, l. 44; Lise, p. 143, l. 6; Anders, p. 155, l. 1), the interactive videos shown in the presentation also failed to offer an equal exchange.

As with the codes, the effort required was seen as excessive and unrewarding when the final message was delivered or found. Anders (p. 150, l. 17), says, “For me it’s just too much effort. If I can see what it’s about I don’t feel like going through everything just to get the message that I already know.” Kristjan goes as far to say that he would simply switch off (p. 158, l. 16) when it comes to watching something that demands effort from the consumer in order to recognise the sender.

It would appear from this initial look that although media consumption has changed in terms of how television is watched and how the internet has become fully integrated in the participants’ lives, when it comes to advertising and marketing, the emphasis is on ease; why should consumers make the extra effort and spend the extra time in order to decipher a marketing message? Before discussing this further, I will go on to discuss the next few main points established from the focus group.

**Adutainment: The conundrum of virals and fun**

‘Adutainment’ was the name given by Lise (p. 141, l. 22) to the interactive adverts and viral videos shown in the presentation, as well as others that were discussed. A amalgamation of the words ‘advertising’ and ‘entertainment’, Lise was referring to the trend of viral videos and interactive

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16 A viral video is a video usually on YouTube which goes viral; i.e. it has the same characteristics of a virus. It starts small and slow, but spreads rapidly, gaining cult status and possibly millions of views (Greenberg, 2007)
adverts which, rather than focusing on the actual product, price or benefits, instead try to instil positive attitudes and feelings towards the brand or company through demonstrating that they, a) are capable of doing something innovative, interesting and fun, b) no longer are pushing the hard sell, and c) are veering away from the traditional and superabundant ‘advert’, in other words; recognising and respecting the consumer.

Although they might be viewed as fun, this fun, however, also proves to have an adverse reaction. The message of the advert and/or the sender is lost in the ‘fun’. As Kristjan says (p. 152, l. 16), “[It was just a fun thing to do, and it distracts from what they’re actually trying to do.” At one point in the focus group, Søren discusses another recent interactive viral video from YouTube, that of Tipp-Ex. However, when I name the brand, he says (p. 157, l. 22), “Yeah, I didn’t even know it was Tipp-Ex.” It became clear that the more the advert tries to be engaging and subtle, the more the message and/or brand becomes lost. Søren summed this up neatly by saying (p. 158, l. 18-21);

“And I didn’t know it was a commercial, and I passed it on and said ‘this is the coolest thing ever made’, and I think it took at least half a month or a month before I read somewhere that it was for Bedre Bustur and then all the focus was on the event agency that made it, but the point is that some of these virals become so good that they overshadow the brand.”

Ultimately, it would appear as if viral videos and interactive adverts are heading the same way as traditional adverts; they are becoming expected, and consumers are growing tired. As Søren says (p. 154, l. 1-6);

“The thing with these ads…it’s all about news value, and they’ll just be biting each others’ tails because when that one is over, McDonalds will make one and Nike will make one and people just talk about who makes the coolest ad, but the whole brand issue, it’s kind of in the background all the time, so again, when I go out and have to buy something, I’ve seen so many viral ads now I

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17 When discussing viral videos I am only referring to those made by brands/companies for marketing purposes – not those made by individuals
18 Please see USB for video
won’t go out and think ‘oh right, Nike made that really cool ad’. You know, I’ve seen so many now I only remember the ad and how it was at that point when it was new and when it was cool and really exciting and then I just go on to the next one. For me, it’s like watching sitcoms, you can’t watch the same episodes two times, because the jokes go flat and you just get bored.”

Although two of the cases (television license and anti-knife crime) are not promoting products, the same problems arise, ultimately accumulating in: is the message lost? Both Lise and Anders mention the fact that if the message of the campaign is obvious, why would they bother watching, or taking part in, the advert? Lise; “You don’t want to be lectured when you already know what the answer is” (p. 159, l. 7), and Anders (p. 148, l. 28-32); “When I saw it I stopped there [indicates point at end of video], as I thought of course they’re going to teach me not to walk around with a knife... You know the message, you know it’s not a great idea to walk around with a knife. So when I see something like that, I just move on.” This would indicate that the message isn’t initially lost, as they are aware of the message before even starting the advert. In fact, the message is partly the reason for switching off, or not watching. However, even though the message is understood, it simply is interpreted as a ‘traditional’ advert, that is; it is ignored.

The conundrum of fun and the loss of message is further highlighted when Søren brings up another case; ‘Hit the Bitch’19. In this case, the user is presented with a girl’s face and shoulders on the computer screen. In the foreground, is a forearm and hand which the user can control via the mouse and smack the girl’s face. At the top of the screen is a scale going from 0% (pussy) to 100% (gangsta). How high you reach on the scale, depends on how hard you hit and how much damage you cause to the girl. Each hit results in realistic wounds on the girl. As Søren commented after introducing the case (p. 149, l. 11), “It was catastrophic... it turned the whole thing around because it was quite fun smacking the bitch.” As with the previous cases, this implies that by making the advert interactive and ‘fun’, in the loosest sense of the word, the message is lost, and

19 A screendump from the site (http://www.hitthebitch.dk) can be found on the USB.
the user simply views it as a game. Kristjan substantiates the problem by saying (p. 152, l. 7-8), “I have the same problem here... I think its fun, but I couldn’t remember what [it] was for.”

Søren brings this point to the fore, saying, “the point is that some of these virals become so good that they overshadow the brand” (p. 158, l. 21). Lise also acknowledges this problem in this sort of advert, as if the adverts are too good, too entertaining or too cool, then you simply forget who made it (p. 157, l. 31). Although an advert might go viral, and be seen by X million people, there is a chance that it does nothing whatsoever to help the brand.

Lise also comments (p. 144, l. 13) on the fact that there seems to be such awareness from companies that consumers don’t want adverts, per se, they bury the brand deep in the advert (or adutainment), thereby losing much of its presumed to be desired effect. Although it is a general rule that if a video/advert is to go viral, the brand must walk a fine-line between being too present, and not present at all. Too much presence and it’s an advert. No presence at all and it’s deceiving consumers. Penny Arcade sums it up in this excellent quote (Weaver 2006);

“The reality is that no agency can create viral marketing, this is the sole domain of the consumer. Viral marketing is what happens when a campaign works – when we allow their message to travel via our own super efficient conduits. Perhaps it is entertaining on its own terms, divorced from the message. Perhaps it is a game or a story, like I Love Bees or other ARGs, where we take ownership in it. What distinguishes this from Guerrilla Marketing is that we are aware of the message. When we are not aware of the message, or when the agents of the message misrepresent themselves, we call this ‘deception’.”

However, is this still the case? Are consumers now so impervious to adverts and so indifferent to the devices of brands that even if the brand is very present, the consumer simply doesn’t care? Lise says (p. 143, l. 4-6) “They leave out their name on purpose in case I don’t want to pass on ads to my friends, and I don’t want to be putting Burger King out all over the place. But I think that’s a little bit of a mistake because if the video
or thing is fun, I’m going to send it, no matter how many brand names it has on it.” Søren agrees with Lise on this point, saying that it simply doesn’t matter anymore (p. 144, l. 20).

Indeed, the trend of these ‘adutainments’ is so common that they have almost become the norm. As Søren says (p. 154, l. 3-6);

“When I go out and have to buy something, I’ve seen so many viral ads now I won’t go out and think ‘oh right, Nike made that really cool ad’ so when I’m looking at shoes it’s like ‘oh Nike that’s a cool brand’... You know, I’ve seen so many now I only remember the ad and how it was at that point when it was new and when it was cool and really exciting and then I just go on to the next one.”

PRODUCT OR IMAGE?
Let us say that the brand/sender of the video/advert is present and remembered, can it even be thought of as traditional advert, selling a product, or are they, as Kristjan says (p. 144, l. 1), just selling image? Søren believes it to be image (p. 144, l. 3-4); “Yeah, it’s image. It’s making people aware of their image, and often their campaigns have little to do with any of their products but are just part of their image thing.” He goes on to say, “it’s the same with all viral campaigns, if it’s Quiksilver or if it’s T-Mobile or anything they’re not really selling a product” (p. 143, l. 32).

Søren is not alone in his beliefs. Lise (p. 153, l. 10), Kristjan (p. 144, l. 8) and Anders (p. 143, l. 9) all see the interactive adverts as ‘fun’, and even say, “it only makes Burger King look really hip and cool, but it doesn’t make me want to buy a burger. It doesn’t make me hungry or anything” (Lise, p. 141, l. 17) and Søren adds that “it’s only to put out a statement that we’re hip” (p. 142, l. 7). He goes on to say (p. 142, l. 1), “They want to brand themselves as a hip, new burger place...and maybe they’re hip but that’s not the reason I’m going for their burgers.”

Anders also sees it from an image perspective (p. 146, l. 25). He sees it as an attempt perhaps to change or simply cement a brand’s image in the mind of the consumer. Especially when it comes to controversial brands, such as Burger King or other fast food outlets, he suggests these adverts might be a good way through which the brand can gather positive brand associations. Yet the effectiveness of this is called in to question
as well. As Lise highlights how attitudes towards passing on adverts to friends has changed (“I think that, lesson number one when you started doing the viral movies, is people don’t want to be passing on ads to each other. So, but I don’t think that’s true anymore. If it’s entertaining, I don’t care if it’s an ad” (p. 144, l. 13-14), so perhaps consumers are just as fickle when it comes to viewing the brands behind the viral/advert in a positively light. Lise also states that, “you tend to get used to them right? So after a while they don’t have the same effect” (p. 150, l. 7). To make use of Søren’s quote again (p. 154, l. 3-6); “I’ve seen so many viral ads now I won’t go out and think ‘oh right, Nike made that really cool ad’. You know, I’ve seen so many now I only remember the ad and how it was at that point when it was new and when it was cool and really exciting and then I just go on to the next one.”

So whether the advert or viral video is branding or advertising, the problem remains the same; the technique can soon become old news for the consumer which results in them becoming part of the advertising blur consumers have already learnt to see through, and dodge.

**Summary**

In summary, the results of my focus group proved very interesting, and quite in line with my hypothesis. Media consumption has changed a great deal. Televisions, in their traditional sense, are becoming redundant. With access to virtually anything online, people choose to simply download, or buy, their desired programmes or films, instead of waiting for them to be shown; “Consumers, who want the ability to control and shape the flow of media in their lives; they want when they want it and where they want it. And, as a result, they pull media content into news paces illegally if that content is not available for purchase in those formats” (Jenkins, cited in Samuels, 2010; 30). This is fitting with the digimodern claim that consumers are no longer simply a recipient, but an author, creating individual, characteristic sequences (Kirby, 2010b).

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20 There is no mention of the Levi’s case as it was barely discussed and gave no interesting insights in regards to the paper.
Mobile phones are no longer used for just making phone calls, but even for actions that have results in the ‘real world’ in real time, through voting, donating, and feedback. Those phones with internet access create a means through which people can be constantly connected to the world online. Essentially, the internet has transformed the ways in which people consume media. In this regard, consumer’s lives and their media consumption can definitely be said to be digimodernist. As Samuels says (Samuels, 2010; 16); “…the laptop may turn any public or commercial space into a private workplace or play space, and since people can take their work and their games with them wherever they go, the whole traditional opposition between workspace and private space breaks down.” The same can be said of mobile phones as what is unspoken in this quote is that the internet plays a large role in breaking down these borders between our spaces. It’s not just Samuels who talks of borders being torn down due to technology. Joshua Meyrowitz and Doreen Massey (from 1985 and 1994 respectively) both discuss the effects technology has on our space and how the internet is significantly reshaping the world in which we live. To quote Kirby once again; “You are the text, there is no-one else, no ‘author’; there is nowhere else, no other time or place” (Kirby, 2010).

Yet while digimodernism is evident in terms of traditional media consumption, there appears to be some discrepancy in how consumers receive messages through channels made possible by digimodernism; i.e. interactive videos, viral videos, and so forth. Take QR codes; while the participants had used a QR code, none of them seemed particularly impressed or convinced that they would do so again. The payoff between effort and reward was not seen to be fair, and with good reason. If the information gained from scanning a QR code could have been presented in an easier to ‘read’ manner, why use the codes at all? The argument of ‘just because we can, doesn’t mean we should’ might be applied here, as it would appear that so far, QR codes are not being used in ways which are attractive to consumers. The same effort/reward problem was seen with the ‘adutainment’ videos; although entertaining, they take far too long to the call-to-action. Although this might have provided some cover for what is otherwise seen as ‘just another advert’, they were seen as requiring too much effort and time for such a simple message. Furthermore, while they might have been fun, amusing and innovative at first, now that it has become a trend, they no longer have the impact and appeal they once had, and as a result, consumers don’t feel compelled to watch or take part. The other potential problem raised was that of
the message and/or brand becoming lost in the ‘fun’. Whether it be advertising or branding, the risk of becoming ‘too fun arises. From the focus group, it would appear that while the advert/video is remembered, the brand/message isn’t.

Ultimately, what the focus group demonstrated was that while consumers are able to decipher traditional adverts and marketing quickly; while their media consumption has changed; and while they are aware of the ‘new’ technology and the possibilities it presents, they do not expect nor demand that it be used in marketing or advertising. Indeed, when it is used, it would seem as if it doesn’t have any particularly positive effects at all. Envision, an advertising agency based in Denmark, published a book titled ‘Fuck Forbrugerne’ (Fuck the Consumers) in 2010. In it, they say (Envision, 2010; 27);

"Communication professionals, advertisers and marketers have heard that consumers think traditional adverts suck for a very long time now. The problem is that one of the results of this is a tendency to hide the advert, and cover the message. The result is a new weariness in consumers. While they might still think that traditional push- adverts are bothersome, this hidden marketing is perceived more and more as irritating, and a disguised way to just talk condescendingly to them. Why don’t the producers of it have enough faith to be open and honest?"

This quote is extremely similar to some of the points raised during the focus group. While technology allows for entertaining ways through which brands can reach consumers, it should not be seen as something that ought to be done.

It is fair to say that marketers and companies have begun to realise that they no longer have complete control of their brand, and have recognised the need to engage and involve consumers (Kaplan, 2005), whether it be through social media, campaigns, or through crowdsourcing adverts. As it has been claimed (Shiffman 2008 cited in Groom 2008; Brown, 2003; Proctor & Kitchen, 2002); consumers are changeable, fickle and inconsistent. While we have moved in to the ‘age of participation’, where ‘consumers’ create and take part (Kotler &
Kartajaya 2010: 3), and where the consumer and whole supply chain are collaborators in the marketing process, there still exists a problem. Kaplan’s (2005) quote from earlier; “Smarter, technologically empowered, time-starved consumers want marketing that shows more respect for their time and attention. Until we get better at engaging consumers, they’re going to continue to push back and resist what advertisers are trying to deliver to them”, can now be seen in a different light. Whereas before, the focus could be said to be upon ‘engaging’ perhaps now, the focus should be placed upon ‘time-starved’.

Technology, as it has been seen, has enabled and necessitated consumers to always be ‘on’, and to engage in what Linda Stone calls ‘continuous partial attention’ (Stone). Consumers have become impatient, a strong characteristic, it could be said, of the digimodern consumer. We are, as digimodernism says, fully engaged in the text, constantly producing and participating (Kirby, 2010), yet at the same time, brands and companies have used this technology to produce advertising and marketing that demands time from consumers. Time to download a programme in order to scan a code; time to sit through an ambiguous viral video; time to decipher a vague advert with a hidden message; time to engage in the latest interactive video or advert in order to get to the message; time which my focus group felt was not rewarded sufficiently.

The last point to discuss from the focus group is whether age had any influence in opinions. Unfortunately, as said, one of the participants born after 1980 did not attend, which resulted in just two ‘digital natives’ being present; Lise and Søren. Although they were both born just after 1980, they were the most participative in the focus group, sharing more and having stronger opinions than the others. Although they had ‘taken part’ in more of the examples shown than the others, they shared the same opinions when it came to the discussions. In fact, as probably noticed, they were the most vocal when it came to expressing their thoughts whether they were positive or ‘negative’. For this study, I do not believe age to be a significant factor. However, this is strictly in this study; as I will come to discuss, other ages, i.e. those born more recently, might very well present quite different findings.
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CONCLUSION

It has been the goal of this paper, to answer the problem statement of; how does the shift into digimodernism radically alter society, further upsetting the balance between consumer and marketing, and what challenges does this shift present to marketing communications?

Through this paper, I have taken a social constructivist standpoint, meaning that I have had an influence on the outcome of the research, and that this, the result, is my interpretation of it.

The central claim of this paper was that we have entered in to the beginnings of a new paradigm, that which Alan Kirby calls digimodernism. Technological developments, such as the internet, have had a profound effect on society. The ways in which we, consumers, interact with this new technology, have become so advanced and so integrated in our lives, that society has undergone a significant and permanent change. In turn, these changes in technology and society have had an undeniable subsequent effect on marketing, and the ways in which consumers receive and interact with it.

I began the body of the paper chronologically with postmodernism, and a brief look at the postmodern consumer. This provided the foundations for the main theory of the paper, digimodernism, and also demonstrated that digimodernism does not represent a clean break from postmodernism, but simply a technologically enhanced evolution; an inevitable continuation of society, due to the revolutionary advancements in technology. After examining the blurred ‘edges’ between postmodernism and digimodernism, which served to illustrate just how closely related they are, I introduced the focus group. The focus group consisted of 5 participants, to whom I showed a total of 5 different cases all of which demonstrated digimodern traits. The main aim of the group was to find out how the participant’s media consumption had changed, and how they interacted and viewed the digimodern cases. A secondary goal was to find out if age affected their views. Coding of the focus group provided me with four key areas; media consumption, effort vs. reward, adutainment; the conundrum of virals and fun, and, product or image. A summary of these enlightening areas has allowed for this section, the conclusion.
Here, I will wrap up this paper, by tackling the two questions within the problem statement, one by one, the first being; how does the shift into digimodernism radically alter society, further upsetting the balance between consumer and marketing?

As said, the shift into digimodernism from postmodernism does not represent a clean break from postmodernism. Many aspects of postmodernism are still to be found in the digimodern society, and indeed, consumers are still, to some extent, postmodern consumers. The societal postmodern tenants of change, complexity and consumerism remain fundamental elements in society today, yet the ways in which consumers interact with, and in, this society have changed dramatically.

Technology has altered the way in which consumers interact, and the way in which society functions. It brought about the democratisation of information, and forced organisations, companies and brands to be transparent in their marketing activities, and to acknowledge their loss of complete control. It has enabled consumers, though still the fickle and fluid consumers of postmodernism, to evolve dramatically. It has blurred the line between our ‘real’ world and our ‘virtual’ world to a point where they are essentially one and the same.

Consumers are more aware, more able, and more switched on than ever before. They have become authors of their own text, able to pick and chose what they see and hear, as well as have a direct say in the outcome. As a result their role in the marketing mix has undergone a genuine revolution. The role of the consumer has shifted to a participative one, an engaging one, and an active one.

So what challenges does this shift present to marketing communications? In answering this part of my problem statement, I will also address my hypothesis’ main point of should consumers be integrated into marketing communications, or perhaps the real question is; to what extent should consumers be integrated? However, before I discuss this further, I will address the problem statement.
By carrying out a focus group I able to get a unique perspective in to consumers’ lives and the way they consumer and interact with the new, digimodern marketing communications. The same changes in technology that empowered consumers also enabled marketing to create innovative, fun, interactive and engaging adverts and campaigns. However, while consumers, their media consumption, and the cases are all digimodern, significant problems became very clear in the analysis of the focus group. While digimodernism allows these campaigns, it also means that digimodern consumers are constantly ‘on’, expecting immediate feedback and results. The overwhelming problem perceived by the participants in the focus group was that the effort and time required to decipher the message was not consistent with the result or reward. While the marketing efforts included the consumer, giving them ways through which to interact and customise the advert, it demanded their involvement, thereby still marketing to, and not marketing with.

In regards to the question of age, the results of the focus group indicated that age did not make a significant difference. However, the gap between the digital natives (born after 1980) and digital immigrants (born before 1980) was not very large. I do believe that if this gap were wider, there might exist some differences. This is discussed more in the following section.

The second problem highlighted was that by making the campaigns innovative and fun, the message was frequently lost. Again, while technology allows for extremely entertaining adverts and/or campaigns, it results in the message becoming either lost, or overlooked. The same applies to viral videos; while the brand must not be overly apparent, this, combined with the novelty of the video, overshadows the brand and/or message. The paradox that digimodernism presents to marketers is no where more evident than here; technology has allowed for interactive, engaging adverts which take precious time with which to participate, yet it also constantly presents to consumers ways by which they can live their lives faster, thereby making them impatient and unwilling to spend too much of their time on one task.

It would appear that marketing just can’t win.
Campaigns and adverts have been made more engaging, innovative and fun, and yet still consumers are not satisfied. While Badot and Cova (2008: 213) saw marketing as in need of a revolution, it is my conclusion from this paper that what is needed is an evolution. Marketing need not completely abandon control and power; giving consumers complete power means, to a large extent, giving up creativity and responsibility. Nor should marketing completely reformat advertisements; engaging adverts and campaigns need not be time consuming and cryptic.

In order to engage and entertain consumers, marketers and brands must engage yet respect ‘time-starved consumers’. It can be fun, it can be adutainment, but it should also be quick, relevant and honest. Consumers know an advert when they see one, and are no longer as condemning of them; this means that brands no longer have to hide; the message should be clear, and not lost in lengthy puzzles or impressive effects. It should be delivered promptly, allowing the consumer to interpret it, and move on.

A market with philosophy is what marketing should be aiming for. This does not mean handing over the creative brief to a crowdsourcing agency, or extreme participant from consumers in the campaign, but simply providing an even balance between effort and reward. As I presupposed in my hypothesis, consumers do not have the time or patience to solve puzzles, or scan a code in order to access a piece of information they could have simply read. Technology maybe integrated in society, but ‘just because we can, doesn’t mean we should’.
Further Research Suggestions

Each day that passed during the writing of this thesis provided me with more information. This area is getting a lot of attention (Kiss, 2010; Farey-Jones, 2010; Herngaard, 2010; Pedersen, M., 2010; Olsen, 2010) at the moment, as brands and marketers struggle to find out how to approach consumers today. This has proved useful, as many of my sources have appeared during the writing process, but it has also proved frustrating, as they often appeared too late for me to include. However, this does mean it is an important topic, and one which must be looked into further. This paper has scratched the surface, and while it has revealed some interesting points, I wholly believe there is much, much more to investigate.

As I stated, I do not believe that the ages of my participants played a particularly influential role – in my focus group. However, as also stated, I do believe that if participants who were born more recently were involved, the results might well have been different. My ‘digital natives’ were born very close to 1980, which begs the question of whether someone born in 1978 would have different norms and attitudes than someone born in 1980? I do not think this is the case. Those born in 1980 were already 15 years old when the internet became popular, meaning that they had already adapted to life without the internet, without smartphones and without digitalisation of almost any kind. I do think it would be extremely interesting and relevant for a focus group made up of participants born around 1990, as this would mean they truly grew up with the internet, and digital forms of communication. However, although this would mean they were fully accustomed to technology, and were true digital natives, it is perhaps feasible that this would only make them more ‘time-starved’, and even more impatient than those born earlier. Another focus group made up of those born on or after 1990 would have enhanced this research, giving it more depth and validity, and allowed more detailed insight into whether or not age really does play a factor in the digimodern consumers’ view of marketing.

A further point of interest could be placed on the location, that is, the country in which the focus group is held, and the nationality of the participants. In countries where digimodernism could be said to have a ‘firmer foothold’ (e.g. digital television being the norm, and so forth)
consumers might have differing attitudes to the cases covered in this paper. If more accustomed to the processes, they might view them in quite different ways.

In sum; further focus groups made up of younger age groups, and/or different nationalities could afford very interesting information, providing marketers with detailed knowledge of how consumers in this digimodern age prefer to be targeted, and engaged.
TV happiness shared by all the family!
I was watching the telly earlier today, when on came an advert. It was (I think) selling sausages. It turns out they wanted me to go onto the internet after watching their advert, and instead of looking at pornography, go to their microsite (which is a bit like a website that nobody goes to), and then put up a video. A video that I would make.

Now I don't know about you, but pretty much all I'm looking for from the maker of sausages is some really tasty sausages. That is all. I don't know if there's been some terrible misunderstanding, where you go the idea that I'd really like the prospect of coming home from work and spending my valuable free time taking part in your stupid idea about sausages, or tea, or washing bloody power, or pretty much anything else for that matter. But here's the thing. I don't. I don't want to make a film, or draw a picture, or nominate a friend. Or compose a soundtrack or re-edit your advert. Really, I don't.

If you'd like to tell me what's good about your product, fine. I may buy it. I may not. I know that might sound boring, and I know it must be very tempting to sit in your nice, comfy offices and dream up schemes where normal people like me forget our everyday cares and participate in your marketing. But, to put a not-too-fine-a-point on it, please, please, PLEASE, if you wouldn't mind, awfully. Leave me alone.

Thanks.

(PSFK, 2010)
Lara Mulady 110 Digimodernism
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