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Mobile Media Technologies and Public Space: a study of the effect of mobile, wireless and mp3 related technologies on human behaviour and interaction in shopping malls.

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, Jaqueline Elizabeth Hiltermann, declare that all of the work and research within this document is my own, and that all of my sources have been properly acknowledged.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores Mobile Media Technologies (MMT's) namely, cellphones, laptops and mp3 players, and their prevalence in public space as well as how they are being used within the space. Much of my research analyses the impact of MMT's on social behaviour and the extent to which they can be seen as the harbingers of a new "postmodern" form of social organisation. My research is predominantly an observational study which is conducted within the postmodern space of the shopping mall. Through my research I discuss the multiple spaces within the shopping mall environment and I explore how humans behave, interact and construct their identities within this space; these ideas are evaluated in terms of the "modern" and the "postmodern" paradigms.

"Postmodernity" and "modernity" are not mutually exclusive and as a result there are ambivalences in terms of how individuals relate to how MMT's are being used in public space.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Mobile Media Technologies and Public Space: a study of the effect of mobile, wireless and mp3 related technologies on human behaviour and interaction in shopping malls.

The aim of my research is to look at the ways in which new mobile media technologies¹ are facilitating changes in social interaction and identity in public space. The MMT's that I examine are cellphones², wireless internet usage on laptops, and mp3 players. The public space in which I conduct my study is the shopping mall.

The MMT's that I am researching are all relatively new phenomena, especially in South Africa, but they have become a ubiquitous facet of urban everyday life and for this reason their influence deserves study. In their preface to *Mobile Communications: Renegotiation of the Social Sphere*, Ling and Pedersen discuss the fact that communication technologies, particularly the cellphone, have become a huge feature of everyday life and have changed the ways in which we think about communication. They state that:

in less than a decade, this device [the cellphone] has established itself technically, commercially, socially and in the imagination of the people. It has changed the way we think about communication, coordination and safety and it has changed the way we think about communication in the public sphere. The mobile phone has become an element in our sense of public and private space and in the development of our social and psychological personas. It has become an arena wherein the language is being played with, morphed and extended. Finally it is reaching out into ever-new areas of commerce and interaction (2005: v).

Whilst they are specifically referring to the cellphone, my aim is to extend their scope to that of mp3 players and laptops; although the relative scarcity of these devices in public space meant that this was not as simple as I initially believed. What is interesting about the point that they are making is the fact

¹ Mobile Media Technologies: hereafter MMT's

² Cellphones: cellular telephones, alternatively mobile telephones

that there is a sense that our public and our private spaces are being complicated by MMT's. The fact that we are also communicating in different ways and relating to technology in different ways is also an area that I have pursued within this study.

Throughout my research I have been faced with two conflicting views about the nature of MMT's and the "influence" that they have on our behaviour and identity. There has been much research conducted on the anti-social potential of MMT's especially with regards to cellphones and mp3 players,³ with little or no research on the positive aspects of such technologies. What my research aims to do is to explore what I shall call the "modern" view that is voiced by Ling and Pedersen when they state the following:

It is clear that a psychological understanding of mobile telephony will enhance our understanding of the phenomena: the degree to which mobile telephony is a disturbing influence, the ways in which users can develop psychological dependence, the links between loneliness and ritualistic behavior and the ways in which social attribution are used in order to make sense of mobile telephone use (2005: vii).

The "modern" opinion of MMT's is somewhat negative and this is voiced by Ling and Pedersen when they use terms such as 'disturbing influence' and 'psychological dependence'. These views are indicative of the "modern" opinion that MMT's have a place within society but that their use should be controlled and used in certain places at certain times.

On the other hand what I call the "postmodern" view is much more flexible and in tune with a "hyper-individuality" that can be achieved through the various MMT's that we use in public space. The use of these MMT's is not restricted in public space and there is generally a much more positive attitude towards MMT's. However it is important to realize that "postmodernity" and "modernity" are not mutually exclusive paradigms. Mark Poster (1995) argues that we are living in a "second media age" and that modernity and postmodernity are not a complete break from each other but rather, "running on a continuum". This

³ See literature review pg 43

means that elements of both exist in society and it is possible for individuals to possess elements of the “modern” and elements of the “postmodern” and this results in certain ambivalences when it comes to our opinions and beliefs about MMT’s and public space.

Ling and Pedersen acknowledge the fact that it has become vital to study MMT’s within a new media context in order to understand the social landscape in which we are now a part. In a South African context MMT’s are relatively new and unexplored and according to Market Tree South Africa⁴, ‘60% of households own a cellular telephone. 20% own a landline. 17% have both.’ and ‘There are 10.2 million adults who own cell phones in South Africa (33%). 85% of these are pre-paid’. With regard to broadband and wireless Internet usage Market Tree South Africa⁵ states that,

Broadband penetration and broadband usage (ADSL and wireless) is touted to increase strongly over the next three years, as broadband prices continue to drop. This will have ripple effects on online e-commerce and shopping behaviour by increasing time spent by consumers online.

Finally with regards to mp3 and iPod usage in South Africa there has as yet been very little research done on statistics and market shares. However the fact that the Apple iPod and all its accessories are readily available for purchase and the fact that mp3 technology has recently been incorporated into cellphones means that their use is bound to increase in the next couple of years.

All of the MMT’s that I am researching are, in a sense, “luxury” items and therefore their use is restricted to those who can afford them. However, I will not be analyzing these MMT’s in socio economic terms. Rather I will be looking at how users have incorporated them into their everyday life and how they have impacted on interaction and identity formation practices in society.

⁴ <http://www.markettree.co.za/south-african-statistics.php?statistics=cellphone> [Accessed: 01/07/2007]

⁵ <http://www.markettree.co.za/south-african-statistics.php?statistics=broadband> [Accessed: 01/07/2007]

With regards to notions of identity the general consensus is that, like cars and houses, the more expensive the MMT the more status it gives the individual. Whilst this common-sense argument no doubt holds water, I have not focused my study to aspects on the economics of MMT ownership, but rather attempted to analyse MMT usage in terms of the facilitation of a new type of individuality. I examine how individuals incorporate technologies into their everyday lives and although I only focus on a particular aspect of everyday life, visiting the shopping mall, I look at how people use these technologies at the mall and how they form part of their identity.

With regards to social interaction much of the initial research that I read seems to instill a sense of “techno-fear”. Various studies looked at the antisocial potential of new media and seem to insinuate a breakdown in communication. My study shows that, like the Internet, MMT’s are facilitating new forms of communication which are as much furthering communication as they are hampering them. The aim of this research is not to condemn new media, nor to condone the various technologies, rather it aims to look at MMT’s in a manner that is progressive and can add to how we understand their influence on society.

Leslie Haddon (in Ling and Pedersen) identifies that the media landscape in which we are working has become much more complicated and the ways in which we are interacting with people has become much more varied. She says that

our communications options are becoming increasingly complex with relatively more major and minor options becoming available. At one time, to study mediated interpersonal communication meant studying the fixed-line phone. Mobile telephony and communication via the Internet may have been the more general, outstanding recent additions, but we might think also of the various ways we have of sending and receiving voice messages, text messages and images, manipulating them and controlling communication (2005: 7).

Thus it is not only the fact that we have more communications options, but the fact that we can select the medium for our conversations and communication

that is important. Haddon goes on to say that it is not 'why we *use* a particular channel or function but why we *choose* it from amongst the possibilities' (2005: 7) that is important. Whilst I will not be exploring this notion per se it is useful in understanding the nature of MMT's and the fact that our communication has become mobile means that we are never without the option of communicating. Haddon uses the phrase 'repertoire of practices' to describe how we use MMT's and this means that we, as humans, use and incorporate technology in everyday life and that there is a strong historical link between old and new practices. Haddon's anti-determinist approach is particularly useful throughout my research because she validates the fact that new communications are not necessarily making us behave in "new" ways.

Habermas argues that in the 18th century, the coffee shop was the space of modernity, where individuals (male) would gather to discuss and debate matters of the day. My idea is that the shopping mall is as central to postmodernism as the coffee shop is to Habermas' idea of the modern public sphere. The shopping mall epitomises postmodern public space owing to the fact that it is a space where people construct their identities, interact and communicate in "new" ways. Through my research I aim to explore these "new" behaviours, I have located my study in three shopping malls that differ in both demographics and to some extent on the disposable income of those who frequent them. The three malls that I chose to examine are the Liberty Midlands Mall in Pietermaritzburg, Sandton City/Nelson Mandela Square in Johannesburg and the Market Square in Plettenberg Bay. My research explores the effect of MMT's on identity and social interaction in the public space of the shopping mall and has little to do with how people shop and what areas they frequent.

A symptom of postmodernity is the fact that our cultural experiences are affected by communications technologies. There is no dispute that we are living in a media saturated age where we have become more dependent on the media for both our work and our leisure. Owing to the prevalence of communications technologies we have become very much more visually orientated and we are now living in a visual culture where our perception of

the world is much more geared to what we see. According to Nicolas Mirzoeff, 'it has been suggested that visual culture is not just a part of everyday life but 'is everyday life' (1998: 3).

It could be argued that visual culture is a typically impatient culture because of the fact that when we are subjected to visual images we are instantly gratified by what we see. Seeing has become a lazy practice and as a result our need to be more and more visually stimulated has increased. However we are also impatient in the ways in which we communicate in that we want faster connections, individuals to respond to our phonecalls quicker and so on. People with "postmodern" sensibilities are able to adapt and feel comfortable in the shopping mall even though it is visually saturated and they also respond to MMT's in a positive manner, however on the other hand individuals with "modern" sensibilities tend to feel uncomfortable in the shopping mall and respond quite negatively towards MMT's. However, as I will argue through my research, individuals may express degrees of the "modern" and the "postmodern" sensibility at the same time and this is where ambivalences arise.

When people are in an environment such as the shopping mall Katz (2003) has a very interesting theory on how they behave in certain circumstances, and why this may be the case. A central idea in my research is that of "liminal transitions" which Katz explores in his essay 'A Nation of Ghosts?' (2003). Katz uses the term in order to describe the middle ground between the point of departure and the point of arrival and argues that people are more likely to use technologies (MMT's) in this in-between space. This is because the technology serves as reassurance and gives the user a sense of company whilst he/she is in a state of isolation. Katz points out that this idea should be explored by further research.⁶

Through my research I aim to argue that whilst Katz's notion of liminal transitions is highly useful, one does not necessarily have to be moving in

⁶ See Literature Review pg 21

order to be in a liminal space. Thus I have identified two different liminal transitions, namely 'the journey' and 'the wait' and I examine them in terms of boredom, anxiety and habitual behaviour.

The liminal denotes a transitional or 'in-between' state. As such, it can indeed be a source of anxiety and this is one of the lines that I follow throughout my research. Although in quite a lot of postmodern theorizing, liminality is regarded as a privileged state where identities are fluid and able to transform, I would argue that in the large space of the postmodern shopping mall where certain individuals are concerned with appearances such a state may be quite uncomfortable. Thus when individuals are in a transitional state they aim to compensate for their isolation. I argue that the shopping mall is a space that aims to channel liminality by offering "safe spaces" where individuals can look as though they are purposefully going about their business.

Whilst "liminal transitions" are highly useful they can be misleading in that what may appear as anxious or uncomfortable behaviour may merely be habitual. So much of what we do in everyday life is habitual and some of the ways in which we use new technologies has merely replaced old habits.

Through my data I have also debated what has come to be known as "mobile phone addiction" (Woong Ki Park in Ling & Pedersen: 2005) and contrasted it with notions of habit, ritual and "hyper-individuality". The fact that we have become accustomed to being in a constant state of connection with people through our MMT's means that we may feel isolated and alone without them, however this does not necessarily point to addiction. Similarly another area that I explore as a symptom of this constant connection is the general concern regarding the annoying, even destructive, impact of new MMT's on social interaction and whether this is justified (Katz: 2003). Both of these ideas, those of addiction and annoyance can be explored in terms of "modern" and "postmodern" ideas and how these different paradigms react to MMT's and how they should be used in public space.

Ultimately it comes down to whether or not individuals feel that MMT's disrupt public space, or whether they transform it. Those who have the "modern" view that MMT's disrupt public space are annoyed when others disrespect their public space and engage with MMT's when it is deemed "inappropriate". In certain circumstances when MMT's are used in an invasive way this heightens their annoyance however in some cases certain individuals abhor their use regardless of the situation. Those who feel that MMT's transform public space are typical of the "postmodern" sensibility in that they are more at home in postmodern spaces and are unperturbed by the use of MMT's in public space. They act as if they believe that public space is transforming and recognize technologies being used in places that are deemed "unacceptable" as completely acceptable or acceptable to a point. The fact that postmodernity and modernity are running on a continuum means that it is more than likely that most individuals share elements of the "postmodern" and the "modern" and this is an issue that I explore alongside my data.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

With regards to constructing a theoretical framework within which to work, Steve Woolgar (in Ling and Pedersen: 2005) discusses the need to look at, what he calls, 'the theory-technology relation'. He says there is a need to re-evaluate how we understand the theories that we apply to new technologies because when we apply older social science theories to new technologies the theories themselves cannot match up to the modern technologies that they aim to explain. He argues that since the first appearance of cellphones (and indeed this can apply to all the MMT's that I am researching) there has been a massive change. He says that,

Arguably, however, we as yet have little clarity about the range of theoretical frameworks for making sense of all this, or of the relation between the different perspectives on offer. Although we have many diverse suggestions- from such as Castells (1996, 2001) etc.- we have rather little sense in depth of how these perspectives overlap and where they differ. We are at a stage in the development of social studies of technologies when we need to reflect on the different theories available and on their relative utility (2005: 23).

Deacon *et al* express similar views to those of Woolgar and they suggest that we also need to rethink the ways in which we study new media. They say that:

Observing the growing centrality of media to these various dimensions of contemporary life, a number of writers have called for a new discipline of communications studies. How far you support this call depends in part on how you interpret that slippery term 'discipline' (1999: 2).

For Woolgar both new and old social science arguments are often just the same theories in different contexts. Asking 'what is new about new media?' helps us to understand that arguments about the "newness" of new media are often

discursively loaded. Whilst the ever-changing media landscape is in a sense a “new” phenomenon, for some the new media technologies are just, “more of the same”, or, the same technology with a different face. What Woolgar emphasizes is the fact that we must reinterpret the ways in which we theorize this landscape. Ultimately the arguments themselves are not new but merely the same arguments that were used to discuss the “old media” and as a result we have to approach existing theories in a new way as well as developing new ways to think about the media.

Steve Woolgar describes the hype surrounding new technologies as ‘cyberbole’ and this hyperbole relating to new media clouds how we look and respond to the media that we are describing. The most common way of dealing with the hype is to immediately proclaim the device as ‘over-rated’ and announcing that the promise that this particular medium claims to live up to (i.e. ‘making one’s life easier’) is actually false. However in some cases these new technologies are in fact making the users’ lives easier and therefore the cyberbole may be warranted.

According to Woolgar,

the main imperative for research is the discovery of more information about the uptake and use, about cultural and national differences and more generally, about variations in relation to the whole standard apparatus of social science categories: gender, work, education, policy, youth and so on. Thus, for example, Katz and Aakhus (2002: 317) envisage a relation between theory and the mobile phenomena whereby theorists subsequently (or at least, antecedently) provide a conceptual justification for observed consistencies in peoples’ interactions with technologies (2005: 26).

However, he does note that we must constantly seek to revise theoretical change and development and challenge theories so that we do not fall into the trap of avoiding new theories and debates.

Instead of looking at technology as something fixed we have to engage with it in a more progressive manner. What is interesting to note is that we are being challenged by having to look at MMT's in new ways. Technologies are flexible and have destabilizing effects on how we perceive them. In certain respects, Woolgar argues that technology is a social construct. For Woolgar it is important to note that technology is flexible and that interpretation, reading and making sense of technology are features of modern social life. Thus technologies exist as culture and as cultural artifacts.

When looking at new technologies and the theories used to analyse them Steve Woolgar says that we need to,

resist the temptation to smother the uncertainty of new technologies by imposing "theoretical" frameworks which "make sense of" the phenomenon. Can we go further and entertain the possibility that the technology might shape the kinds of theoretical scheme we deploy? Instead of simply applying pre-existing frameworks to the new technology, can the technology change our theory? Can the new technologies get us thinking at a different analytic (and thereby perhaps at a different theoretical) level? (2005: 30)

What we need to do is to look at the ironies and ambiguities relating to how we engage with MMT's and also acknowledge as well as question the hyperbole (or indeed *cyberbole*) surrounding them so that we can study MMT's in a manner that is progressive.

Ultimately, as a researcher, one has to always remember that MMT's are counter-intuitive, in that we use them in ways that the developers did not intend for them to be used. Also the rate at which we have accepted MMT's into our everyday lives has been vast and unprecedented.

The various angles of study within my research are not mutually exclusive and as a result there is some overlapping within my literature review.

2.2. PUBLIC SPACE

As we know in cultural studies it is vital to study context in order to understand how humans behave in the world. It is for this reason that I place so much emphasis on theories of public space and have chosen a very specific environment in which to locate my study.

However space is a problematic concept because there are as many real spaces as there are metaphorical spaces. Auge says that,

the world of supermodernity⁷ does not exactly match the one in which we believe we live, for we live in a world that we have not yet learned to look at. We have to relearn to think about space (1995: 36).

Space is problematic because whilst we may be living in the postmodern age there are still elements of the modern that exist in society. There are still modern spaces as much as there are postmodern spaces and hence one realizes that modernity and postmodernity are 'running on a continuum' (Poster: 1995), and whilst the postmodern age is upon us the modern has not wholly disappeared.

2.2.1. THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

The theorist, Edward Soja (1989), privileges space and geography more than time and history. Instead of looking at historical time lines, language and so forth, he analyses flow, mappings and how humans embody landscapes and this enables his study to contextualize how humans behave in the world. Space is political and ideological and therefore it is never innocent. Soja (1989:70) says

⁷ Supermodernity is a term used by Auge that emphasises the pace and nature of the change between modernity and postmodernity. Instead of using 'postmodernity', Auge prefers the term 'supermodernity' which is discursively loaded. Similarly many theorists prefer to use 'hypermodernity' in the same manner. Whilst both terms are essentially different words for 'postmodernity' the fact that they are discursively loaded cannot be ignored.

that 'space is not a reflection of society, it *is* society.' Like Foucault, Soja sees space, knowledge and power as closely related and states that,

geography may not yet have displaced history at the heart of contemporary theory and criticism, but there is a new animating polemic on the theoretical and political agenda, one which rings with significantly different ways of seeing time and space together, the interplay of history and geography, the 'vertical' and 'horizontal' dimensions of being in the world freed from the imposition of inherent categorical privilege (Soja: 1989, 11).

What I glean from Soja in my research is the fact that he places great emphasis on 'human geography' which in a sense is sociology and it becomes obvious that understanding space is essential to understanding human behaviour and identity. Simon During, who writes ten years later on this same dynamic, emphasizes the importance of Soja's work on 'geographical and spatial imagination' (1999: 113) and says that modernity and postmodernity need to be understood as something more complex in terms of space and time. He goes on to say that,

postmodern social transformations, in particular, involve a reordering of space: speed and accessibility triumph over distance, through the shrinking of the world can lead to strong barriers being placed between margins and centers from either side (1999: 113).

Soja is extremely influential in how we understand how humans behave geographically both in modernity and postmodernity. Through his writing he examines the changing nature of the world in which we live and this is evident in how we understand both modern and postmodern space and how individuals behave in such circumstances.

Although his notions of modernity and postmodernity are extremely useful I feel that he misses an important moment in modernity which de Certeau manages to

capture. For Soja modern space is the objective public sphere⁸; a place where the system works, the rules are defined and people know their place within the system. However de Certeau suggests that modernity changed slightly with the advent of an individual who observes and participates in the modern urban landscape.

In his seminal essay, 'The Practice of Everyday Life' (1984), Michel de Certeau writes about identity formation in public space, and the very nature of modern public space. His essay is complex and has been fundamental to debates on urban public space. He writes about a 'theory of a city, or rather an ideal for the city' (in Doring, 126: 1999) and comments on how individuals behave in society and how external forces such as politics and culture shape us. De Certeau offers advice on what tactics we can employ in order to assert our own power on the system to avoid being manipulated.

However, for the purposes of my research I am more interested in his 'spatial practices' whereby he writes from the theoretical position of the '*flâneur*'. De Certeau is a *flâneur* who walks the city and remarks on how humans behave in the ever changing modern landscape. De Certeau is an important theorist for the purposes of my research, not only theoretically, but also in terms of the angle from which he writes. As a theorist he literally encompasses the role of the *flâneur* as he moves through public space observing the changing landscape.

In the Baudelairean sense the *flâneur* is a person who strolls the streets and describes them as he moves through the city;

⁸ Jurgen Habermas was a student of the Frankfurt School and his idea of the public sphere is often idealised as a space where individuals were enlightened, and capable of rational debate. The public sphere is associated with print media and its institutions are defined by the nation state. Habermas sees the public sphere as somewhere where a new kind of sociability arose and social interaction became freer and more accessible. The development of print media meant that the public sphere became a place dominated by writing. The public sphere was a place centered around argument, rational debate and critical thinking and this led to a new type of subjectivity.

“*flaneur*” is a word understood intuitively by the French to mean ‘stroller, idler, walker.’ He has been portrayed in the past as a well-dressed man, strolling leisurely through the Parisian arcades of the nineteenth century- a shopper with no intention to buy, an intellectual parasite of the arcade. Traditionally the traits that mark the *flaneur* are wealth, education, and idleness. He strolls to pass the time that his wealth affords him, treating the people who pass and the objects he sees as texts for his own pleasure. An anonymous face in the multitude, the *flaneur* is free to probe his surroundings for clues and hints that may go unnoticed by others (<http://www.thelemming.com/lemming/dissertation-web/home/flaneur.html> [Accessed: 10/10/2007]).

The need for such an observer increased dramatically in cities during nineteenth century Europe because of the changes owing to industrialization and modernization that were facilitating a change in sensibility. Although the term is French, and was applied to Paris in particular, it has become universally accepted and is very useful in understanding what it means to be an observer. What is key to the notion of the *flaneur* is that he is an observer as well as a participant; and it is at this moment that one can see the disjunction in the modern state of being.

Benjamin’s writing on the Baudelairean *flaneur* validates the need to study space and whilst his space was the modern urban landscape the space that I am analyzing is the postmodern landscape of the shopping mall.

According to Benjamin, the *flaneur* disappeared as the commercial world slowly deserted the interior-exterior of arcades for the carpeted, artificially lit department stores that were to replace them (<http://www.thelemming.com/lemming/dissertation-web/home/flaneur.html> [Accessed: 10/10/2007]).

However I would argue that the new postmodern shopping mall is not unlike a street or an arcade in its design and therefore the figure of a *flâneur* is not out of place in its aisles and walkways.

I believe that the ethnographer and the *flâneur* are very similar because they both move about a space observing. I would argue that both are like scientists because they are constantly searching for answers and questioning their environment. However the major difference appears to be that the ethnographer is involved in studying his subjects whilst the *flâneur* is involved with analysing his objective surroundings. De Certeau (1984) describes the city as a book and the individuals walking around it as readers. Similarly,

as a member of the crowd that populates the streets, the *flâneur* participates physically in the text that he observes while performing a transient and aloof autonomy with a 'cool but curious eye' that studies the constantly changing spectacle that parades before him (Rignall: 112). As an observer, the *flâneur* exists as both active and intellectual (Burton: 1). (<http://www.thelemming.com/lemming/dissertation-web/home/flaneur.html> [Accessed: 10/10/2007])

Nowadays we are living in a visual culture so it seems that perhaps we are more likely to *absorb* our environment rather than *read* it. It seems that early modern space is typically conceived of as the 'public sphere' where debates and matters of common concern are discussed. This later became the space of the *flâneur* where individuals seemed to question the rigid workings of the public sphere and then finally postmodern space emerged which is much more about display, spectacle and the move away from ordered space to a space where desire and consumption are important. An environment like the shopping mall is an ideal space in which to observe because it is an archetypal postmodern space where the subjects are anonymous and are constantly playing with their identity.

The theorist Frederic Jameson writes extensively on the emergence of new kinds of spaces and despite the fact that he was writing in the early 1980's he has a

highly intuitive grasp on the movement that technology would take in the next couple of decades. His ideas are slightly “McLuhanesque” in nature in that he too is discussing the idea of the ability of technologies to ‘extend the human sensorium’ (McLuhan: 1964). Jameson (1983) states that:

My implication is that we, ourselves, the human subjects who happen into this new space, have not kept pace with that evolution; there has been a mutation in the object, unaccompanied as yet by an equivalent mutation in the subject; we do not yet possess the perceptual equipment to match this new hyperspace, as I will call it, in part because our perceptual habits were formed in that older kind of space of high modernism. The new architecture- like many of the other cultural products I have evoked in the preceding remarks- therefore stands as something like an imperative to grow new organs to expand our senses and our bodies to some new, as yet unimaginable, perhaps ultimately impossible, dimensions (in *Cultural Turn: selected writings on postmodernism*:11).

Through my research I will be following this idea of MMT’s becoming extensions of ourselves, although I will not be looking at it in a purely determinist light. The “modern” opinion of McLuhan is that he is a determinist, but the “postmodern” belief subverts McLuhan’s theories and claim that he is an anti-determinist because ultimately humans use technologies in a counter-intuitive way. As individuals we have a ‘repertoire of practices’ (Haddon: 2005) which we can choose from and therefore the belief is that we can never be solely determined by MMT’s.

Jameson’s study of the Bonaventure Hotel along with Canclini’s studies on urban space in South America are also very useful in coming to terms with postmodern and modern spaces. Canclini (1997) writes about the two components of the binary that is present in the city, the real and the imagined. That we can travel by both transport and through stories means that we can both live within the real and the imagined city. Canclini’s study of Mexico City is filled with such binaries that epitomize the postmodern situation and he looks at, what he terms, the

'invisibilisation of the city'. He says that communication technologies have made people seek their news from their homes rather than from the people within the city, an attitude strengthened by fear that has made people hide behind the walls and security systems of their houses. Canclini says that the city is "disappearing" into the imagined stories that glamourise it behind walls and security that is closing citizens within their homes, and into newspapers and television which decrease the need to seek news from the city itself. Such is the state of postmodernity in the urban landscape of Mexico City that there are multiple spaces that can be observed. Through this study one can glean that people are ultimately striving for safe and secure spaces and these are often glamourised fantasy oriented spaces. In the case of Canclini, people are searching for spaces that are secure and are thus living in the city through the media which offer them sanctuary from the dangers of the urban landscape. Postmodern space is typically safe and secure and often offers an escape from everyday life. The shopping mall for example is unnatural because it is a fantasy space that centers around desire and consumption. Every aspect of the mall aims to entice people to spend money and to conjure up desires of what life may be like with certain products. Thus the space of postmodernity is as much a real space as it is an imaginary one.

2.2.2. NON-SPACES

Joshua Meyerowitz, is highly valuable with regards to the inhibiting nature of postmodern space. In his seminal essay, *No sense of Place: the impact of electronic media on social behaviour*, Meyerowitz (1985) identifies a syndrome of 'placelessness'. He explores notions of where *exactly* one is whilst engaging with the media and identifies early notions of cyberspace, virtual space and real space and explores and investigates them in terms of the flexibility of space and how it can mean differently in different contexts. Similarly Nicolas Mirzoeff explains this idea of 'placelessness' in his discussion of virtual reality; he uses the example of the telephone and states when you're on the telephone you're in the space which

'comes into being when you are on the phone: not exactly where you happen to be sitting, nor where the other person is, but somewhere in between' (1999: 91).

Meyerowitz epitomizes the modern mindset in that he looks at the invasiveness of technology and how it has the ability to change the very nature of space.

Electronic media destroy the specialness of place and time. Television, radio and telephone turn once private places into more public ones by making them more accessible to the outside world. And car stereos, wristwatch televisions, and personal sound systems such as the Sony 'Walkman' make public spaces private. Through such media, what is happening almost anywhere can be happening wherever we are. Yet when we are everywhere, we are also no place in particular (Meyrowitz: 1985, 125).

What seems to be lacking in Meyerowitz's work is the liberating nature of this new type of space. Writing from the perspective of 1985 it seems that he is negating a huge factor of this new space which is the fact that they have the possibility to transform the mundane into the sublime and the fact that as a postmodern individual one can be in many spaces at one time. Whilst I do not disagree with Meyerowitz's notion that electronic media may potentially destroy the specialness of place and time, I do not think that they are wholly responsible for this as I explore in this research.

On the other hand Auge writes from a more postmodern perspective and claims that there are "non-spaces". He adopts this term in order to explain the places that we are, even when we are not there. However unlike Meyerowitz he acknowledges that potential of this new type of space, however he does note the importance of rules that are associated with these various spaces:

But the real non-places of supermodernity- the ones we inhabit when we are driving down the motorway, wandering through the supermarket or sitting in an airport lounge waiting for the next flight to London or Marseilles- have the peculiarity that they are defined partly by the words

and texts they offer us: their 'instructions for use', which may be prescriptive ('Take right-hand lane'), prohibitive ('No smoking') or informative ('You are now entering the Beaujolais region'). Sometimes these are couched in more or less explicit and codified ideograms (on road signs, maps and tourist guides), sometimes in ordinary language. This establishes the traffic conditions of spaces in which individuals are supposed to interact only with texts, whose proponents are not individuals but 'moral entities' or instructions... (1995: 96).

Auge's 'non-spaces' opens the door to further reading on the subject of the flexible nature of space. However it also enlightens us on what it means to be a postmodern subject, radically different to that of the earlier modern subject, owing to the number of choices made available to us through the changing nature of space. Ultimately as a postmodern individual we have a variety of spaces that we can inhabit at one single time and this can be both liberating and inhibiting at the same time.

Much of my study looks at the liberating factors of MMT's expressed by the "postmodern" individual as well as the annoying and anti-social concerns that are expressed by the "modern" individual with regards to MMT usage in public space.

2.2.3. LIMINAL SPACES

Liminal space is not a difficult concept to explain, however it is complex in nature. Whilst Katz is very useful in gaining an understanding of the concept I feel that there is much more that can be said on the nature of liminal space. In his essay, '*A Nation of Ghosts?*' Katz states that,

the mobile phone is often used during transitions from place to place or activity. For example, I have commonly observed that the first thing people do in the U.S upon exiting their car after having parked is to check their phone for messages, or begin to make phone calls with it. Likewise, as people leave class buildings, they immediately begin using the mobile phone. Transitions - such as leaving a table after lunch with a friend or

walking along the street - are also common locations for usage. They not only keep the individual company during these transitions, but may provide a sense of reassurance. This is a topic that merits further investigation (Katz: 2003, 28).

I would argue that liminality is not a new concept although it has not been theorized in the past. The *flâneur* is a figure in modernity who thrives during liminality in that from his point of departure to his point of arrival he analyses the city and becomes involved in commenting about it during his transition. Now in postmodernity we are more likely to engage with technologies rather than with our surroundings.

In our everyday lives we are surrounded by moments when we are in liminal space and are at odds with our situation. Liminal space is typically an uncomfortable space because we are neither at our point of departure nor at our point of arrival and it is here that we feel the most self conscious and anxious.

The liminal denotes a transitional or 'in-between' state. However, in quite a lot of postmodern theorizing, liminality is regarded as a privileged state where identities are fluid and able to reform. Through my research I argue that in the large space of the postmodern shopping mall where appearances are everything such a state is potentially uncomfortable. I argue that whilst the shopping mall is a space that aims to channel liminality by offering "safe spaces" where individuals can look as though they are purposefully going about their business their ultimate goal is to eliminate liminality. Shopping malls try to eliminate liminality by offering the shopper various decoys and visual spectacles to disguise the fact they are actually in a state of liminality.

What is important to note is that whilst Katz's notion of liminal transitions is highly useful, one does not necessarily have to be moving in order to be in a liminal space. Hence, I have identified two different liminal transitions for the purposes of

my research, namely 'the journey' and 'the wait' and I examine these in terms of boredom, anxiety and habitual behaviour.

- **The journey:** This liminal state indicates movement, be it the journey from the parking lot to the entrance of the mall, or the walk from one shop to another. Regardless of the distance traveled, it is that transitional stage during the journey where one is in a state of flux and may feel vulnerable or ill at ease.
- **The wait:** this is the stage where an individual is waiting for something or someone. The person they are waiting for may be due to arrive or may simply have left for a brief interlude (be it cellphone conversation or bathroom break). Whatever the case may be the individual waiting may feel anxious (wondering if the person will arrive) or bored (as is a common state when we are waiting).

I find anxiety an important part of liminality because according to Foucault (1967) the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time. Time probably appears to us as one of the various distributive operations that are possible for the elements that are spread out in space (in *During*: 1999, 120).

Unlike Foucault, Featherstone epitomises the "postmodern" view in that he describes the act of shopping is a leisurely experience. It is almost as if he is negating any sense of liminality in that he takes the extreme postmodernist view which is such that he sees the postmodern shopping mall as a place where we are so over-stimulated that we forget about being alone or in a liminal state. As we move around the public space we are audiences who move amongst waves of imagery and spectacle in a kind of trance and he states that,

as cities de-industrialise and become centres of consumption one of the tendencies in the 1970's and 1980's has been the redesigning and expansion of shopping centres which incorporate many of the features of

postmodernism in their architectural design of interior space and simulated environments: use of dream-like illusions and spectacles, eclecticism and mixed codes, which induce the public to flow past a multiplicity of cultural vocabularies which provide no opportunity for distancing and encourage a sense of immediacy, instantiation, emotional de-control and childlike wonder (1991: 103).

Thus whilst shopping is supposedly a “leisurely” activity, it is also an experience in which we are constantly being stimulated owing to the high level of visual saturation and spectacle. The “postmodern” sensibility can cope in this environment and be emotionally absorbed, yet the “modern” sensibility is likely to feel overwhelmed. Ultimately individuals with “postmodern” mindsets are more likely to be comfortable with the contradictions within the space; they may feel quite relaxed and at ease whilst being visually and culturally bombarded by what the environment has to offer.

Hence the fact that the shopping mall offers us “safe spaces” which reduce the potential of being in a liminal state and also offer a sense of security that perhaps not many other postmodern spaces can. However regardless of these “safe spaces”, individuals who are not at ease in such a large and visually saturated space may still feel uncomfortable. The fact that malls encourage people to be self-conscious owing to the high level of commercialism and consumerism also adds to the fact that someone with a more “modern” sensibility is likely to be anxious. Through my research I aim to analyse both paradigms alongside my data.

2.2.4. THE POSTMODERN SPACE OF THE SHOPPING MALL

Whilst I have already analysed the shopping mall in terms of a secure postmodern space (one that centers around consumerism, spectacle and display as well as a potentially self-conscious and anxiety ridden environment) I feel the need to discuss it in terms of previous research. However I am not analyzing the

shopping mall per se, rather, I will be looking at it in terms of a postmodern space that epitomizes the postmodern sensibility.

In the Journal of Shopping Center Research I have found research which has been useful in understanding the space of the shopping mall as well as gendered behaviour. In an article, 'Men and Women: A Comparison of Shopping Mall Behaviour' (2004), Jasper and Hu conduct a study of how men and women behave in shopping malls. According to the article women are more satisfied with the shopping experience and have a more positive attitude towards shopping in general, whilst men are more likely to engage with shopping on the Web (117). They also account for point of purchase (namely, utilitarian shoppers, value-conscious shoppers, indecisive shoppers and impulsive shoppers) which looks at the different types of purchasing (126-127). Despite the fact that the study is American it is very useful in terms of how men and women behave in shopping malls and the differences in their mental processes. Whilst my study is not specifically gendered it is essential to take into account that some behaviour is gender specific.

What is very interesting is that this study shows that women often shop to relieve stress and have a relaxing day out, whereas men tend not to find the environment relaxing or therapeutic. (2004: 129) These ideas are very useful in that they can be linked to ideas of the "postmodern" sensibility and the "modern" sensibility despite the fact that they are gender orientated.

What is also useful in this article is that it relates to uses and gratifications in that utilitarian shoppers shop in order to purchase what they need and view shopping as a chore, value-conscious shoppers shop in order to gain goods at a bargain price, indecisive shoppers shop out of boredom, and finally impulsive shoppers shop in order to gratify their need to acquire new things. What is interesting is the fact that the authors note the importance of the 'shopping experience' (2004: 129) which is relevant to my study because it shows that people not only shop to

gratify their need of consumer goods, but also their need to experience the postmodern environment of the shopping mall.

Another gender specific study is Morris's 'Things to do with shopping centres' (1999) where she writes from a contemporary cultural studies feminist theory perspective. Morris brings in Bourdieu as well as de Certeau and Benjamin in her study and says that we are all *flaneurs* in the shopping mall environment. During says that,

because so much information about, and theory of, shopping centres circulates; because, finally they exist as architectural outcomes of information technologies which track and manage consumption, Morris cannot write a piece which limits "shopping in a shopping centres" to individual pleasure and consciousness in the manner of de Certeau's "walking in the city". Instead she turns to a history of particular shopping-centre sites she knows (1999: 391).

What this emphasizes is the fact that, as researchers, we need to look at sites within our own contexts in order to make sense of the environment in a culturally specific manner.

According to Neville Quarry, shopping centres have a "unique sense of place" (in During: 1999, 393) in that there is a sense of politics and localization. In many ways individuals have their own sense of identity in a shopping centre. Despite the fact that the shopping mall or shopping centre are formulaic in many ways they all have a unique identity that differentiates them. All of the shopping malls that I am studying display this.

Where Morris's study differs greatly from that of Jasper and Hu is that her study moves away from the uses and gratifications model and looks at the fact that the longer one spends in the shopping centre environment, the more likely he/she will engage with and absorb the spectacle (in During: 1999, 397). However she also asks the question as to what makes people comfortable or uncomfortable in

the environment. For the purposes of my research the idea that stands out is the following:

Shopping centres illustrate very well, I think, the argument that you can't treat a public at a cultural event as directly expressive of social groups and classes, or their supposed sensibility. Publics aren't stable, homogenous entities- and polemical claims assuming that they are tell us little beyond the display of political position and identification being made by a speaker. These displays may be interesting in themselves, but they do not necessarily say much about the wider social realities such polemics often invoke (in Dunning: 1999, 398).

In contemporary cultural studies Auge has written on the postmodern space of the supermarket. His ideas lend some insight into the shopping mall although obviously the space is somewhat different. Auge writes from the perspective where the identity of the subject becomes almost absorbed into the environment and cannot be distinguished from technologies such as the credit card:

Another example of the invasion of space by text is the big supermarket. The customer wanders round in silence, reads labels, weighs fruit and vegetables on a machine that gives the price along with the weight; then hands his credit card to a young woman as silent as himself- anyway, not very chatty- who runs each article past the sensor of a decoding machine before checking the validity of the customer's credit card (Auge: 1995, 99-100).

What Auge expresses is the fact that with our various technologies we are treated as 'the average man' and addressed by all systems in place in such a way that validates this behaviour. Thus our identity is affected by the context of the space that we are a part of. However I would argue that we are not treated as the 'average man' but rather singled out as individuals, and everything about postmodern technology tells us that we are different from the masses. This sense of "hyper-individuality" is key in understanding how postmodern individuals see themselves in public space.

What is important for the purposes of my study is that men and women behave differently and therefore one cannot simply assume that all behaviour will be the same. Secondly whilst some argue that shopping is a way of gratifying the individual's needs it is probably more accurate to say that shopping is an experience and is as much about the shopping as it is about the immersion in the environment and being entertained. Finally one cannot simply say that we are determined by our technology and treated as a homogenous mass of unthinking individuals owing to the fact that most of us use MMT's at one time or another. However as researchers we need to be careful in analyzing spaces that we are familiar with and contextualizing them in an academic manner.

2.3. IDENTITY

Through my research I aim to look at both the "postmodern" and "modern" sensibility and how certain individuals incorporate technologies into their everyday lives. Although I am only focusing on a particular aspect of everyday life, visiting the shopping mall, I want to look at how people use a particular technology during this act and how it forms part of their identity.

2.3.1. MODERN AND POSTMODERN IDENTITY THEORY

The work of Jameson, de Certeau and Poster are important in terms of analyzing postmodern and modern space on a macro level and the individuals within it as potentially isolated owing to the sensibility that the environment awakens.

The Baudelarean *flaneur* influenced T.S. Eliot and poems such as 'The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock', 'Preludes' and 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' all epitomize the modern sensibility where the city is a theatre and time doesn't have a unified direction. Eliot's poems are typically modern and feelings such as ennui and questions such as 'what next?' and 'why am I here?' are typical of the modern individual.

And indeed there will be time
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;
There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;
There will be time to murder and create,
And time for all the works and days of hands
That lift and drop a question on your plate;
Time for you and time for me,
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
And for a hundred visions and revisions,
Before the taking of a toast and tea.
(The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock: T.S. Eliot)

The above exemplifies some of the problems facing the typical modern individual. The modern identity is one which centres around 'essence' and a 'core' identity. However Eliot is describing the difficulty that the modern individual undergoes in maintaining a stable identity and a sense of agency in the modern urban landscape. Man's agency is lost owing to the fact that time is the master of consciousness. Ultimately the poem describes the promise of an identity that cannot hold up to the bigger questions such as 'why am I here?' and 'what will happen next?' For the modern individual these questions are reformulated over and over again because when one is alone in the modern environment the mind is alone and can do nothing but deal with these overwhelming questions. Eliot sees modernity as a stark contrast with Romanticism and thus his picture differs from a theorist like Edward Soja who writes about an individual deeply affected by space and time but capable of adopting different identities. Soja states that:

Berman broadly defines modernity as a 'mode of vital experience', a collective sharing of a particularized sense of 'the self and others', of 'life's possibilities and perils'. In this definition, there is a special place given to

the ways we think about and experience time and space, history and geography, sequence and simultaneity, event and locality, the immediate period and region in which we live. Modernity is thus comprised of both context and conjuncture. It can be understood as the specificity of being alive, in the world, at a particular time and place; a vital individual and collective sense of contemporaneity. As such, the experience of modernity captures a broad mesh of sensibilities that reflects the specific and changing meanings in the three most basic and formative dimensions of human existence: space, time and being (1989: 24-25).

Frederic Jameson is one of the most influential writers on postmodernism. In a collection of his essays, *The Cultural Turn*, Jameson writes about postmodernism in a complex and highly insightful manner. He attributes the postmodernism to capitalism and consumer culture;

I believe that the emergence of postmodernism is closely related to the emergence of this new moment of late consumer or multinational capitalism. I believe also that its formal features in many ways express the deeper logic of this particular social system. I will only be able, however, to show this for one major theme: namely the disappearance of a sense of history, the way in which our entire contemporary social system has little by little begun to lose its capacity to retain its past, has begun to live in perpetual present and perpetual change that obliterates traditions of the kind which all earlier social information have had in one way or another, to preserve (Jameson: 1998, 20).

What Jameson is saying is that consumerism and capitalism have resulted in individuals living in the present and this means that we are losing our sense of traditions and history. This can be identified in many postmodern spaces, especially the shopping mall because it enhances our sense of the 'now'. What we do in the shopping mall is all about instant gratification, not letting offers pass us by and being engaged in the present moment of the shopping mall environment. However I do not necessarily believe that the shopping mall

experience is detrimental to our sense of history or our traditions despite the fact that it is an environment that centers around the immediate present.

Mark Poster talks about the “second media age” rather than postmodernity and he acknowledges the fact that the term is discursively loaded and seen as newer and better.

On the eve of the twenty-first century there have been two innovative discussions about the general conditions of life one concerns a possible “postmodern” culture and even society; the other concerns broad, massive changes in communications systems. Postmodern culture is often presented as an alternative to existing society, which is pictured as structurally limited or fundamentally flawed (Poster: 1995).

Whilst Poster warns us of the possibility that we may be lured into the trap of viewing the ‘second media age’ as newer and better he also leads us to understand that we should view postmodernity carefully as it is a contested term. Whilst one has to understand that whilst postmodernity is generally accepted as a progression from modernity it is not a mutually exclusive term and the fact is that modernity and postmodernity co-exist in today’s world. Hence we are surrounded by spaces that are modern and spaces that are postmodern as well as people with modern mindsets and people with more postmodern mindsets depending on their context and access to new technologies. The shopping mall, for example, is a space where people can adopt a range of identities and play with them through their purchases as well as through how and when they choose to engage with new MMT’s.

What I glean from both Eliot and Soja is that the “modern” view is one that has a prescribed idea of what public space should be and what types of behaviour it should facilitate. The “modern” individual is a unique individual with a core identity despite the fact that there may be other conflicting identities at play, and in terms of communication they favour face-to-face communication. Within both his/her private and public space there are specific rules that apply to the spaces that he/she inhabits. In terms of Jameson and Poster it can be seen that although

postmodernity is a contested term it is a valuable one which helps in trying to contextualize both behaviour and the spaces that we inhabit as individuals. In terms of this research, I view “postmodernism” as a sensibility which celebrates numerous identities and encourages “hyper-individualism”. This “hyper-individualism” means that we can construct our identities and perform them within public space and use MMT’s in a way that goes against what society may deem “acceptable”. The “postmodern” individual is comfortable with any kind of criticism regarding appearances or behaviour in public space.

2.3.2. THE ROLE OF MMT’S IN SELF PERFORMANCE AND IDENTITY DISPLAY

The way in which we engage with MMT’s has a lot to do with our own sense of identity and the way in which we construct our everyday identities is a performative act that we undergo on a daily basis.

In the poetic words of Gubrium and Holstein (2000:101), ‘we talk ourselves into being’. Through the interaction with others, interviewers included, people telling stories about themselves are engaged in actively constructing their identity in a particular context and performing it in orientation to a particular listener... Goffman also echoes this notion when he discusses the dynamics of effective performance in terms of the listener as much as the teller. (Goffman 1972, 1981). The focus of the present study, therefore, centers specifically on the way users of a particular medium- the mobile phone- choose to use it to present themselves to others (Lemish and Cohen in Ling and Pedersen: 2005, 188).

In line with this Fortunati says that this behaviour of constructing ones identity in public space began with urbanization and individuals used devices to help with this display and these devices became a part of our ritualized behaviour:

The 19th and 20th centuries were the period in history when urbanized humanity went through the difficult stage of building a public image,

elaborating an etiquette that would regulate behaviour and modes of living in public places in the midst of an anonymous crowd. To do this, people provided themselves with a series of prostheses that would help them to affect composure. There was the pressure to assume a self-assured and fluid behaviour. Cigarettes were one of the most powerful prostheses to show how “cool” one was in the public space. Stewart (2003) acutely explains how cigarettes and the mobile have many things in common. The mobile helps one to acquire self-assured behaviour, to fill in the gaps or the empty moments with a precise rituality. In other words, it helps to overcome timidity and reserve, traditionally part of experiences in contact with others in the public space... However, the mobile mediates not only dialogic communication, but also the performance of one’s own image in public space (in Ling and Pedersen 2005: 211).

In my research I consider both the role of MMT design in self-performance and ‘identity display’ which is a term adopted by the theorist Erving Goffman. Goffman also explores what he terms the ‘front-stage, back-stage’ analogy (1972). For the purposes of my research I consider this idea predominantly in terms of social interaction however many theorists writing on identity display have referred to Goffman. Goffman’s notion of a stage is a highly useful one when considering identity because it immediately evokes performance. Goffman says that we have two personas that we can call up when constructing our identities, namely the ‘back-stage’ persona and the ‘front-stage’ persona. The ‘back-stage’ persona is the identity that we adopt when we are out of the public eye and the ‘front-stage’ persona is the identity that we adopt when we are in the public eye.

In the chapter, ‘Mobile Phones as Fashion Statements: The Co-creation of Mobile Communication’s Public Meanings’ (in Ling and Pederson: 2005), Katz and Sugiyama explore public mobile communication technology as ‘front-stage’ and ‘back-stage’ phenomena. They look at design in terms of commercialization and public reinterpretation. They argue that we *consume* mobile communication

technology. They state that the mobile phone is a 'physical icon and an item of decorative display related to fashion and design' (in Ling and Pedersen, 2005: 63). Ultimately the mobile phone, as well as all technology, is strongly connected with ingrained human perceptions of distance, power, status and identity. As well as this MMT's are strongly connected with display because individuals choose them in order to make a statement about their own identity in terms of status, power and so forth.

What interests me for the purpose of my research is why individuals choose their particular MMT's and what they believe their technologies say about them.

According to Katz and Sugiyama technology is like fashion in that it is another way in which we are able to communicate messages of how we perceive ourselves as well as our status, power and wealth. Throughout the chapter they look at how we construct our identity around our cellphones and I will be looking at this in my research. For example one has to question an individual's desire to accessorize their cellphone, or purchase certain iPod accessories to personalize their iPod. Katz and Sugiyama state, 'the mobile phone thus becomes a device that is not merely a tool but as well a miniature aesthetic statement about its owner' (in Ling and Pedersen: 2005: 64).

2.4. SOCIAL INTERACTION

Social interaction and the role that MMT's play in human behaviour in public space is an important and large component of my research. Throughout I will be looking at how MMT's are being used and what type of interaction they are facilitating amongst people. Here I will look at face-to-face communication and examine how MMT users behave when they are alone or isolated and whether their usage aims to compensate for the lack of interaction in public space. I also look at habitual behaviour and how it is often misinterpreted as MMT dependency.

2.4.1. GOFFMAN ON SOCIAL INTERACTION

I have already touched on Goffman in terms of identity but he also forms an integral part of my research on social interaction in that he paved the way for thinking about interaction amongst people. Although my research does not look at face-to-face communication per se, it does include data on face-to-face communication and the role MMT's play in such communication. Tom Erik Julsrud writes:

The connection between space and behaviour is in sociology most elaborated by the so-called 'symbolic interactionist', and in particular by Erving Goffman (1956, 1961, 1971). From this perspective, the social situations are crucial factors to understanding social behaviour. Moreover, understanding the situation is also crucial for the individuals to understand their own conception of themselves. Following Goffman, the frame of action for human behaviour is the social setting, where people can play out their different *roles*. The analogy of a 'stage' is used to describe the place where individuals have the chance to put into action their own character. Underlying the dramaturgical metaphor is the more general point that the self should be recognized as a social product. The self of an individual is what comes to life on the stage in different social interactions (in Ling and Pedersen: 2005, 98).

In the chapter, 'Mobile Back to Front: Uncertainty and Danger in Theory-Technology Relation' (in Ling and Pederson: 2005), Steve Woolgar looks at the arguments about the way in which social interaction is affected by new technologies. He draws on Goffman's ideas about 'front-stage' and 'back-stage' and looks at how we behave in different ways in and out of the public eye, and how these behaviours are often blurred.

Goffman draws upon and develops a dramaturgical model of social interaction. The "I" and the "me" of symbolic interactionism are the stimulus for Goffman's thinking on social interaction more generally. Especially in the presentation of self in everyday life (Goffman, 1971),

social beings manage the tension between the “I” and the “me” by performing. They act out the difference between them; they are social actors who act out a role. The tension is arguably multiple when we consider all the kinds of situations and interactions through which people pass in the course of the day (in Ling and Pedersen: 2005, 33).

How we behave in the world is performance based and we swap roles throughout the day. According to Goffman our real self is the ‘backstage’ self and ultimately we draw back into this character when we are displaying our truer self:

Goffman stresses the importance of face-to-face interaction, which sustains front-stage work. New electronic technologies, notably the Internet and the mobile, deprive us of this face-to-face contact. Since, it is supposed, anyone can therefore assume any identity on the Internet (or at the end of a mobile, or as an sms sender/receiver), the immediacy of face-to-face contact is removed (in Ling and Pedersen: 2005, 34).

Whilst this initially sounds like a simplistic view Woolgar goes on to say that with new MMT’s communication becomes more complex because we are in perpetual contact. He says that because we can have a face-to-face conversation with one person whilst smsing another person our ability to distinguish between front-stage and back-stage becomes blurred.

As a result, it is argued, audiences are less certain about what/who is being performed. This also means that it is easier to guess who is the real you. It is more difficult to maintain face work. So front-stage is no longer distinct from back-stage. So the boundaries between them blur. The overall picture is one of a relatively stable pattern of interactions that becomes disrupted by the arrival on the scene of a new technology. In particular, the stability lies in routine, understood and accountable ways of making out that something (even if we do not know what) lies beneath the surface (in Ling and Pederson: 2005, 34).

Thus Woolgar realizes that the world in which we live is changing because of new MMT’s in that so much of what was previously private behaviour is becoming public. This becomes important when analyzing why it is that certain

types of people are uncomfortable or annoyed when people engage with their MMT's in certain spaces.

Although some criticise Goffman for being too simplistic his modern ideas are very useful in how we begin to understand identity theory and social interaction. One has to realize that because he was writing in the early 1970's the fact that he could divide social behaviour into two binaries seemed sufficient. However now we have to understand that it is not as simple as the 'front-stage' and 'back-stage' metaphor. Woolgar rightfully suggests that,

the potential importance, then, of the 'front-stage, back-stage' metaphor is not that it provides another convenient way for analysts to divide up the world, but that in suggesting that the world is other than it seems, it signals a moment of uncertainty, and instability, of suggesting that what seems to be the case is not the case (in Ling and Pedersen: 2005, 36).

2.4.2. HABITUS

Whilst Goffman may be seen as too simplistic in terms of social interaction and behaviour by using the 'front-stage' 'back-stage' model, Pierre Bourdieu extends behaviour to within the realms of what he terms '*habitus*'.

'*Habitus*' is what Pierre Bourdieu describes as second nature and is what we would associate with habitual behaviour. It is associated with personality or disposition and it is usually a spontaneous act. However whilst this act may be spontaneous in nature, Bourdieu argues that often there is some deliberation before the act is carried out. Thus what is interesting is that although we would initially argue that we are determined by our habits, Bourdieu suggests that we can exercise our own freedom over them. This is substantiated by the fact that in some cases we consciously decide on the act that is to be carried out. Hence it is assumed that we are in control of our habits.

Habitus is the thing that explains how 'types of behaviour can be directed towards certain ends without being consciously directed to these ends, or

determined by them.’ ‘The habitus’, he notes elsewhere, ‘entertains with the social world that has produced a real ontological complicity, the source of cognition without consciousness, intentionality without intention, and practical mastery of the world’s regularities which allows one to anticipate the future, without even needing to posit it as such’ (Bouveresse in Shusterman: 1999, 53).

Bourdieu is an anti-determinist and argues that humans are agents not merely subjects and actions are not obedience to certain rules which are rigorously enforced through signs and regulations, but rather the employment of strategies that we have learnt over time. Bourdieu’s humanist approach means that he is not negating the role of the body in our everyday decisions regardless of whether or not they are in fact conscious.

Bourdieu elaborates the conception of the *habitus*, those embodied rituals of everydayness by which a given culture produces and sustains belief in its own ‘obviousness’. In this way, Bourdieu underscores the place of the body, its gestures, its stylistics, its unconscious ‘knowingness’ as the site for reconstruction of a practical sense without which social reality would not be constituted as such. The practical sense is a sense of the body, where this body is not a mere positive datum, but the repository or the site of incorporated history (Butler in Shusterman: 1999, 114).

Our *habitus* often inclines us to act in certain ways but this does not mean that it compels or forces us to act in such a way. Thus we are not ruled by *habitus* but rather guided by it.

The body does not merely act in accordance with certain regularized or ritualized practices, but it *is* this sedimented ritual activity; its action, in this sense, is a kind of incorporated memory. Here the apparent materiality of the body is recast as a kind of practical activity, undeliberate and yet to some degree improvisational. But this *habitus* that the body *is* is generated by the tacit normativity that governs the social game in which the embodied subject acts. In this sense, the body appropriates the rule-like

character of the habitus through playing by those rules in the context of a given social field. Its participation in the game is the precondition for a mimesis or, more precisely, a mimetic identification, that acquires the habitus precisely through a practical conformity to its conventions (Butler in Shusterman: 1999, 115-116).

Much of the concern regarding my research is what constitutes addiction and what constitutes habit. Bourdieu's influence on the nature of *habitus* is highly useful in this way in that much of what we may attribute to addiction may actually be habitual behaviour. I feel that there is too much emphasis placed on determinism where we should rather be looking at the individual's relationship to his/her technologies.

2.4.3. MMT DEPENDENCY

At the outset I have used the word dependency as an alternative to addiction in order to avoid falling into the pitfall of taking too narrow a scope. Addiction is a loaded term which has a slightly different connotation to that of dependency.

Woong Ki Park states the following:

Although the term 'addiction' can be imprecise, it does grasp the notion of real-life problems. Addiction can cause detrimental damage both to individuals and to society because addicted people cannot work or study owing to their physical and psychological dependence on substance/media, disabling their functionality within society (in Ling and Pederson: 2005, 254).

He goes on to say that one must study mobile phone addiction for two reasons, First, it is important to define the nature of mobile phone behaviour among people because what constitutes a problem use or not must be defined. Furthermore, the study of addiction can better understand the possible social and psychological effects and processes of media use because the notion of addiction includes high/over-use of the medium (in Ling and Pedersen: 2005, 254).

The purpose of Woong Ki Park's research is,

to provide some means of making an empirical distinction between normal and problem mobile phone use. This research attempts to assess whether problematic mobile phone use exists, and how it might happen. In an attempt to explain why and how certain people become highly dependent on (addicted to) the mobile phone, and what problematic use might be, this research adopts the notions of substance use/abuse (in Ling and Pederson: 2005, 255).

The trouble with this view is that 'problematic use' is often misinterpreted and then common sense views take preference over theory and reason. For example Lemish and Cohen refer to various subjects that they have interviewed and immediately one can see the negative perspective that they have towards the mobile phone:

'The cellular has become a disease in Israel. You can't find anyone without a mobile. Every child has one, even in first grade,' said one man bluntly. 'Everyone owns a mobile phone. Every child holds one and talks on the bus and everywhere,' complains another one in disgust. 'This is worse than cigarettes, this mobile phone thing. My younger brothers- they are all hooked. I have a 17-year-old sister who is hooked on the mobile phone and it's a plague.' A terminology of addiction and sickness was commonly used by these interviewees to connote a negative tone of moral denunciation of such a bad habit: 'They take the mobile phone with them everywhere- to the bath, to the toilet, to bed... it rings and they immediately run to it... they are linked to it so they won't even miss one call... what a disaster if my older daughter misses a call!' complains one mother (in Ling and Pedersen: 2005, 194-195).

Although this study was conducted in Israel there are many parallels in terms of the general attitudes towards cell phone usage. Whilst it cannot be denied that the cellphone, as well as MMT's in general, have invaded our everyday lives one has to question what we term "normal" usage. The common sense view is that

we cannot live “normal lives” without MMT’s and that even our private moments such as ‘bathing, going to the toilet and going to bed’ are not free from the invasiveness of MMT’s. However one has to consider whether this behaviour is a sign of so-called “addiction” or whether we have evolved into the “McLuhanesque” idea of ‘extending the human sensorium’ (1964).

It seems that in terms of the debate around “high levels of usage” the “modern” view is that this is classified as addiction whereas the postmodern individual celebrates the potential of MMT’s and looks at it as *habitus*. Woong Ki Park argues that ‘addiction can be described as an unusually high dependence on a particular medium’ (2005:254), however I would argue that we are not determined by our medium but we determine how and when to use them in a “hyper-individualistic way”. Woong Ki Park also argues that MMT’s guide us to organize our lives in certain ways but “postmodernists” would disagree and argue that we use MMT’s to organize our lives in way that suit our specific needs.

Finally one has to take into account the uses and gratifications approach because it is not accurate to say that all humans are determined by the media that they use.⁹ Although Woong Ki Park believes in the negative effects of MMT’s he does give insight into the “modernist” sensibility as well as pointing out some important ideas about the nature of MMT’s and how we use them. He states that there are two different types of uses of the media and these will influence how you behave towards various MMT’s,

the reasons people give for using certain media can be reduced to two core factors: ritualistic and instrumental. Instrumental use of media is typically defined by motives for information-seeking or arousal-seeking

⁹ The Uses and Gratifications Approach negates the ‘direct effects’ tradition that previously dominated audience studies. Whereas ‘direct effects’ stated that the media influenced audiences in a negative way, the ‘uses and gratifications’ approach claims that people actively use the media to gratify specific human needs. This means that audience are not merely passive to the media and technologies but can engage with them and use them to whatever end they require. The ‘uses and gratifications’ approach is anti-determinist and would negate any feelings that we could become addicted to MMT’s.

behaviour, whereas ritualistic use of media is defined by motives such as habit, passing time or companionship...

People who have ritualized motives are habitual media users and have a high affinity with the medium, whereas instrumental [users] use media selectively and have an affinity with specific content...

Habitual/ritualistic use of media implies dependency or addiction. (in Ling and Pedersen: 2005, 258).

Where I feel Woong Ki Park's argument falls short is that he aligns habitual and ritualistic behaviour with addiction whereas the "postmodern" view argues that *habitus* is something that we are guided by rather than wholly influenced by.

Thus although at the outset Woong Ki Park seems to have a convincing argument for mobile phone addiction I believe it is too simplistic in that it uses an active-mind, passive-body binary which is indicative of the "modernist" paradigm.

2.4.4. ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

As postmodern individuals we are living in a world of juxtapositions and contradictions. We seek individuality but yet we are drawn towards mass marketing and branding, and we seek to make ourselves visible by drawing attention to our unique sense of style, however in some circumstances we withdraw from the public gaze.

Our desire to be outside the gaze of others underlies Goffman's theorizing around face-to-face interaction. While focused on 'on-stage' behaviour, Goffman acknowledged the individual's life spent 'off-stage'. The romance of being off-stage lies in an individual's ability to escape the demands of social interaction (Goffman: 1981). The ability to escape the pressures of social responsibility and to be free of any impediment to one's desire is a fantasy, and an extravagant self-indulgence. This realm beyond the reach of others characterizes our understanding of private space (Cumiskey in Ling and Pedersen: 2005, 227).

The above emphasizes the fact that as humans we often seek isolation from face-to-face interaction and are sometimes naturally antisocial. However

regardless of this there has been a great deal of research on the antisocial potential of new media.

In his essay “A Nation of Ghosts?” Katz focuses on social interaction and political involvement with regards to telecommunications. There has been general concern for some time regarding the annoying, even destructive, impact on new MMT’s on social interaction and whether this is justified. Katz says that,

on the one hand, we see that people are everywhere using and enjoying their mobile phones. And, on the other, we hear everywhere people complaining about the irritation they experience when others use these technologies. One way this topic could be explored is in terms of whether these disturbances are normative, and thus likely to disappear, or inherent in the nature of the way we operate as humans (2003: 22-23).

Once again we can see the two binaries at work in terms of the modern and the postmodern. ‘On the one hand we have “postmodern” individuals enjoying their MMT’s and on the other we hear “modern” individuals complaining about the irritation experienced owing to this usage’. However through my research I aim to show that it is not merely a case of, “modern versus postmodern” because the two terms are not mutually exclusive.

In the chapter, “‘Surprisingly, Nobody Tried to Caution Her’, Perceptions of Intentionality and the Role of Social Responsibility in the Public Use of Mobile Phones’, Cumiskey writes that:

As public use of wireless technology becomes more widespread, the world is no longer divided into users or non-users. Most of us now maintain the dual role of mobile phone user and observer (of other people’s use of this technology). This duality of roles creates a dual allegiance in the sense that, during time spent in public places, we may respond negatively to seemingly irresponsible mobile phone users, yet as mobile phone users ourselves, we may promote protecting the unregulated use of wireless technology in public spaces (in Ling and Pedersen: 2005, 225).

Thus Cumiskey along with Poster is of the opinion that modernity and postmodernity are 'running on a continuum'. Here we see a typical case of individuals having an ambivalent or juxtaposing relationship towards how they relate to MMT's and how they feel about the use of MMT's in public space. Thus it can be seen that individuals may, on the one hand, adopt the "modern" position and complain about MMT usage in public space and, on the other hand, they may take the "postmodern" position and use MMT's in the situations that they have previously complained about.

2.5. NEW MEDIA RESEARCH IN SOUTH AFRICA

From my initial readings I found a number of studies connected with social activism. Herman Wasserman, (in Nightingale & Dwyer) writes about the use of new media technologies on the promotion of social activism; namely HIV/AIDS and basic services:

It is often argued that digital media technologies have provided new tools for activists who work for social change. It is argued that these technologies make it possible for grassroots social movements to mobilize support on a global level, to spread information about their activities outside the mainstream commercial media and to discuss issues on a wider platform. Still, questions about the effectivity of these media for social action remain. The advent of email and the Internet gave rise to widespread optimism that these media would create new ways for groups that are excluded from mainstream media coverage to make their voices heard (2007: 133).

Initially one cannot ignore the apparent *cyberbole* in this statement especially when one considers the digital divide. Wasserman's study is an interesting one although the fact that it is specifically looking at South Africa as a third world and underdeveloped country means that for the purposes of my research it is not relevant.

Burton & Van der Hoven (2007) explore Information Communication Technologies (ICT's) in terms of the digital divide and the legacy of apartheid. What is useful for the purpose of my research is their view on determinism and affordances:

On the one hand this points to the fact that technologies do have determining properties; they are not free potentialities whose use is wholly secondary to the subject interacting with them. On the other hand, the mere presence of a technology does not guarantee the uses to which it will be put. Some of these uses may coincide with those envisaged by the manufacturer, but others may not (2007: 240-241).

Thus although there is the argument that we are determined by technology the fact that we have incorporated MMT's (ICT's) into our everyday lives in ways that manufacturers may not have expected means that we have determined *how* we use a particular technology. Therefore it can be argued, from this perspective, that we are not determined by the technology, rather it is determined by us.

From my initial research I have found numerous studies on the negative effects of iPods, especially with regards to hearing problems and anti-social behaviour amongst children; however most of this research has been conducted in Australia and the United States and in terms of the South African context there are mainly newspaper and magazine articles to support this owing to international 'panic' (http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?area=/insight/insight_tech/&articleid=268096 [Accessed: 17/06/2006]).

With regards to cellphone research there have been a number of studies conducted however in South Africa not much has been done in terms of new media usage and the influence of such media in public space. In an article 'Towards linking normative theory, communication policy and audiences in South African communications research', Fourie notes the importance of looking at normative media theory, media policy and media audiences. What is interesting is that Fourie does note the 'new society' that postmodernism is encouraging,

in this new society, new channels of public communication exist, brought about by new technologies, convergence, liberalism, deregulation and globalization. Public communication is now, among other things, characterized by new distribution platforms, a multimedia approach, interactivity, the blurring of the distinction between public and private (commercial) media, niche markets, diversity, choice and abundance (Fourie, 2005: 15).

I deal with these ideas throughout my research except I contextualize them within the scope of the shopping mall; whereas Fourie focuses quite specifically on notions of the digital divide I will not be including this in my study.

In South Africa the emergence of cellphones, mp3's and wireless internet has been something of a phenomenon. In his book *The Hitchhikers Guide To Going Wireless: A South African handbook of cellphone and mobile technology* Arthur Goldstuck remarks on the growth of new mobile media technologies in South Africa and Africa itself.

Until now, we have seen mainly the positive impact of the cellular phone on the lives of millions of South Africans and countless people across Africa. Where once the majority of this continent's inhabitants had never made a phone call- or had to walk long distances to reach a public phone- now up to a hundred million people carry this revolutionary means of communication in their pockets and in the palms of their hands.

The success of the cellular phone in Africa, and its status as one of the fastest growing mobile markets in the world, present us with ample evidence of just how deep-seated the need for such communication lies in a region where it did not exist before (2005: 201).

Both Goldstuck and Fourie explore the digital divide and whilst this is important Fourie notes the importance of audience research and the lack of such research in South Africa in particular.

However, without consulting the different publics constituting the South African society about their views concerning the role of the media in society and in their lives, and about policy issues, research will be skewed and of little value for the development of South African normative media theory and communication policy. In this regard the lack of and need for fundamental audience research in South Africa is urgently needed (Fourie: 2005, 30).

With regards to my research in a South African context my aim is to look at how individuals are behaving in public space. Although it is limited to individuals who have the disposable income to frequent shopping malls I believe that it will have a valuable impact on how we understand human behaviour and identity in terms of MMT usage in postmodern space. The fact that there has been so little research on the South African context other than the digital divide makes this research particularly relevant.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

First and foremost this research is a behavioural study that looks at how MMT's influence individual behaviour, identity and interaction in public space. Whilst I have conducted interviews and asked respondents to answer questionnaires, the majority of my research data comes from observing people in a specific environment and for this reason understanding what it means to be an observer is vital. It will also be important to take into account the ethics behind being an observer in a public environment such as the shopping mall.

My research is predominantly qualitative in nature in that I used interviews and social observation as the primary methods of collecting data.

Unlike the Positivist paradigm my research acknowledges the importance of how people make sense of the world that they inhabit. The Positivist paradigm fails to separate the natural world from the cultural world:

Positivists begin by asserting that investigating the social and cultural world is no different in principle to investigating the natural world and that the same basic procedures apply to both. From this it follows that, as in the natural sciences, the only admissible scientific evidence is 'facts' established by systematic personal observation (Deacon *et al*: 1999, 4).

On the other hand, my research does not fall in the Interpretive paradigm which tends to over-emphasise human agency and the possibility of full self-understanding, and, in so doing fails to recognise that people's understanding of their own environment may be limited or distorted.

At its most general, my research is located in what Deacon *et al*/ call the 'Critical Realist paradigm'. Unlike Positivism, this approach emphasises that the social world is not made up of neutral facts but, unlike Interpretivism,

Critical Realism insists that unlike the structures that organise the natural world, social and cultural structures have traceable historical careers. They may be surprisingly resilient but they are not permanent. They emerge at particular times, in a particular set of circumstances, and are continually modified by social action until they are eventually transformed into something else (1999: 10).

This approach is particularly useful to me because digital technology, and MMT's in particular, are widely held to be at the forefront of a significant change in social organisation. As Deacon *et al* write,

many social commentators argue that we have now reached exactly such a moment of transition as the familiar organising structures of modern life, which emerged from the seventeenth century onwards and crystallised in the nineteenth century, are being replaced by new postmodern forms (1999: 10).

One of the issues this dissertation will address is the impact of MMT's on social behaviour and the extent to which they can be seen as the harbingers of a new "postmodern form" of social organisation.

Ethnography is an important element of interpretive research and Van Loon (2001: 273) asserts that it 'has become a more established tradition in cultural studies'. My research does, to a certain extent focus on the lived experience of individuals; how they incorporate MMT's in everyday life and how these MMT's affect their being in the world. However, it is not a "true" ethnographic study *per se* because I did not become part of the subjects' lives and of their everyday lived experiences. Rather, the position I adopted is closer to that of the Baudelarian *flâneur* which is in keeping with the Critical Realist paradigm. This is because instead of immersing myself in the environment and in the lives of the individuals

I was observing, I kept my distance and observed my objective surroundings and encompassed the landscape of human geography¹⁰ in that I analysed how people behaved within the shopping mall. Ultimately the *flâneur* is simultaneously immersed in the environment and distanced:

For Baudelaire, the ultimate hero of modernity is the figure who seeks to give voice to its paradoxes and illusions, who participates in, while yet still retaining the capacity to give form to, the fragmented, fleeting experiences of the modern. This individual is the poet (Gilloch, 1996: 134).

The *flâneur* is not the same as the ethnographer in that he/she observes an environment rather than a group of individuals that have agreed to participate in the study.

What makes the *flâneur* a useful position to adopt as an observer is the fact that the individuals that I observed were strangers who were unaware of my presence and for this reason I did not need to get their permission in order to begin observing. Playing an open but covert role is especially easy in the shopping mall environment because it is an open location which means that people have access to and from the environment in an unlimited capacity.

3.2. PRELIMINARY QUESTIONNAIRES

3.2.1 NATURE OF THE STUDY

The first step in my research was to draw up a questionnaire¹¹ and ask individuals to complete it. I did this in order to gauge my field of study so that I could specify what I was looking for in my observations and also to hone into specific questions in my interviews. Beginning research is always a daunting task because any social phenomenon can be studied in a wide variety of ways. For this reason it is important to know what the possibilities for research are. Once this is determined it is equally important to limit one's research and thus my

¹⁰ See Literature Review Pg 12

¹¹ See Appendix One

preliminary questionnaires helped me to define my research and to link questions to literature that I read.

3.2.2 PROCESS

The questionnaires formed my preliminary quantitative research and whilst they cannot stand alone in terms of substantial data they are important in terms of the interviews and observations that followed. I handed them out to 26 males and 26 females of various ages and income brackets. 34 of them were handed out in Pietermaritzburg and Hilton whilst the other 18 were submitted at The Durban University of Technology (The Durban City Campus). The majority of respondents were random people who I did not know personally whilst about 20% were individuals that I know personally. It was a relatively simple process because unlike interviews questionnaires take a relatively short amount of time to complete and therefore individuals are more likely to answer them.

The questions I asked were designed to:

1. Gauge the prevalence of MMT's amongst individuals and the extent to which this was dependent on income, age, or necessity;
2. Assess what features individuals look for in MMT's and if this is also gender specific;
3. See how often individuals frequent malls and their reasons for frequenting them;
4. Gauge if the comment "MMT addiction" (Woong Ki Park in Ling and Pedersen: 2005)/dependence has application;
5. Gauge whether Katz's term "liminality" (Katz: 2003) can be extended;
6. Assess if and where individuals find MMT usage inappropriate.

3.2.3 USEFULNESS FOR MAIN RESEARCH AND LIMITATIONS TO MY PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

The limitations to the preliminary research is the fact that I only circulated 52 questionnaires and for this reason the data is slightly limited. It is also customary in any research involving people that there will always be an element of problematic data because individuals are not always truthful about certain behaviours; this is especially true in new media studies involving MMT's and our actions relating to them. There is a certain stigma involving MMT behaviour, especially public usage, and therefore it is likely that some respondents were not absolutely truthful and for this reason the questionnaire analysis is not completely accurate. The fact that there is a dilemma between the "modern" and "postmodern" sensibility is also a factor that I have explored in my data analysis.

However regardless of the limitations I believe that the preliminary questionnaires prove to be invaluable because of the insight that they give into the terrain of further research. By analysing the questionnaires I managed to formulate interview questions as well as determining a process for my observations.

3.3 OBSERVATIONAL RESEARCH

My research project, as a whole, was based on a series of systematic observations as well as interviews designed to study the effect of MMT's on identity, public space and social interaction. The observations are the core of my study and they are backed up by interviews, and to a certain extent, supported by data that I collected through my preliminary questionnaires. I conducted simple observations and adopted the role of the *flaneur* as I wandered through the shopping malls observing people going about their business as well as my surroundings.

3.3.1 LOCATIONS

I chose to locate my observations in three shopping malls that I was able to access and that varied significantly in terms of demography and size. My observations were conducted at the Market Square in Plettenberg Bay, Sandton City/Nelson Mandela Square in Johannesburg and the Liberty Midlands Mall in Pietermaritzburg.

The majority of my observations were conducted at Liberty Midlands Mall in Pietermaritzburg because I am based in the city and have unlimited access to the mall. The mall is relatively large and has a couple of Internet hotspots and Internet cafes. The demographics are varied and there is a mixture between high and middle income bracket individuals who frequent the mall on a daily basis. The fact that there are shops such as *Pep*, *Sheet Street* and *The Crazy Store* as well as shops like *Boardmans*, *Woolworths* and *@Home* means that the mall caters for a range of income brackets as well as people with varying disposable income. I conducted observations for a total of 30 hours over a two week period.

The Market Square is a relatively small shopping centre as opposed to a shopping mall however it does have an Internet café, Internet hotspots and numerous shops that are found at major shopping malls such as *Mr Price*, *Mr Price Home*, *Woolworths* and a *Mugg and Bean* coffee shop. Like the Liberty Midlands Mall, the Market Square also caters for a range of income brackets owing to the fact that it has shops like *Pep*, *Sheet Street* and *The Crazy Store* as well as high end stores such as *Woolworths*, gift shops and a gym. The layout of the mall is a “strip mall”. Owing to the geographical distance between Plettenberg Bay and Pietermaritzburg I spent 15 hours conducting observations over a one week period.

Sandton City/Nelson Mandela Square are effectively two different shopping malls that are connected. (Sandton Square was renamed when the Nelson Mandela Statue was erected in the square in 2004 to commemorate ten years of

democracy.) These malls cater to people with a medium to high disposable income, visible in the numerous coffee shops, designer shops and an extensive banking mall. There are very few “low end” stores and for the most part the shops are more expensive. The *Woolworths* is much larger with a far greater range than the *Woolworths*’ at Liberty Midlands Mall and Market Square. It is for this reason that I chose to analyse Sandton City/Nelson Mandela Square because of the fact that individuals who frequent the mall have a high disposable income and have more money to spend on consumer goods. Again I spent 15 hours conducting observations at Sandton City/Nelson Mandela Square over a one week period.

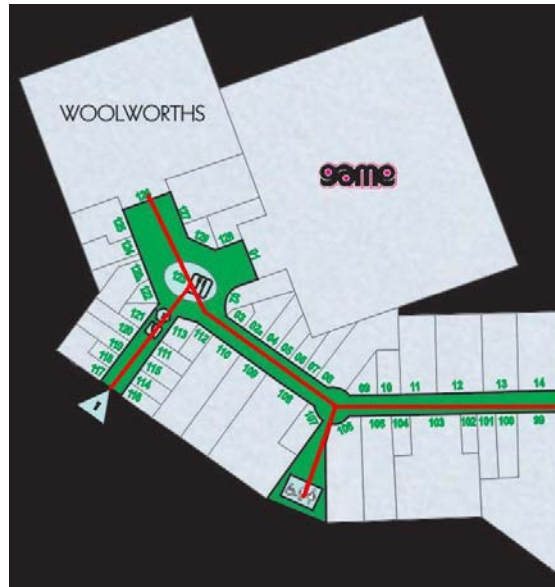


Figure 3.3.1. Liberty Midlands Mall

Here I observed individuals walking from Entrance 1 towards *Ninos* Restaurant (marked as shop 23 with a sign of a knife and fork) and into *Woolworths*. I also observed individuals walking from *Woolworths* towards the Food Court (pictured in Liberty Midlands Mall Diagram 2) and MMT activity in the Ladies Toilet (marked with signage on the map).

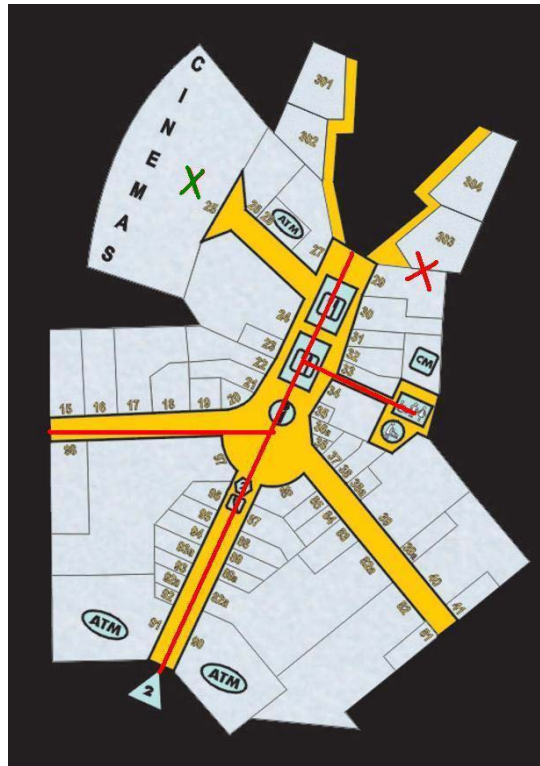


Figure 3.3.2. Liberty Midlands Mall

I observed individuals walking into the Food Court from *Woolworths* and Entrance 2. Again I observed MMT activity in the Ladies Toilet (marked with the signage). I also observed MMT behaviour in The *Mugg and Bean* coffee shop which has an Internet hotspot (marked with the red X) and the cinemas (marked with the green X). The Food Court is a very valuable place to conduct observations because it varies in demographics and cultures. There are a range of restaurants that cater for all income brackets and cultures (for example there is a Halaal take away outlet).

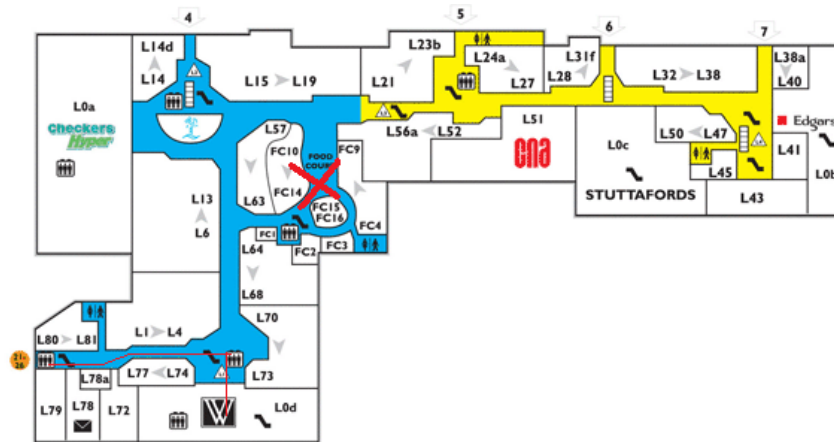


Figure 3.3.3. Sandton City Lower Level

Here I observed individuals moving from the underground parking towards and inside *Woolworths* as well as the Food Court (marked with the red X). (I wanted to conduct observations in similar places to those of the Liberty Midlands Mall in order to have an accurate comparison from which to work).



Figure 3.3.4. Sandton City Cinema Level

I observed MMT activity at the *Ster Kinekor* cinemas (marked with the orange X).

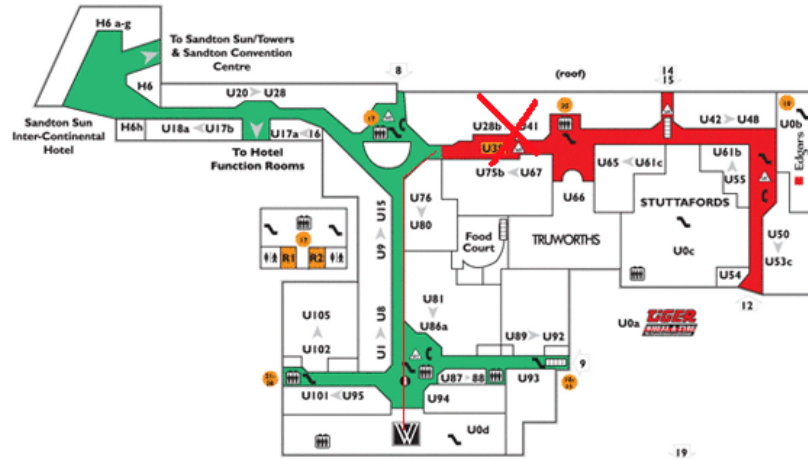


Figure 3.3.5. Sandton City Upper Level

I observed individuals walking from the upper level of *Woolworths* to the *Mugg and Bean* coffee shop which has an Internet hotspot (marked with the red x).

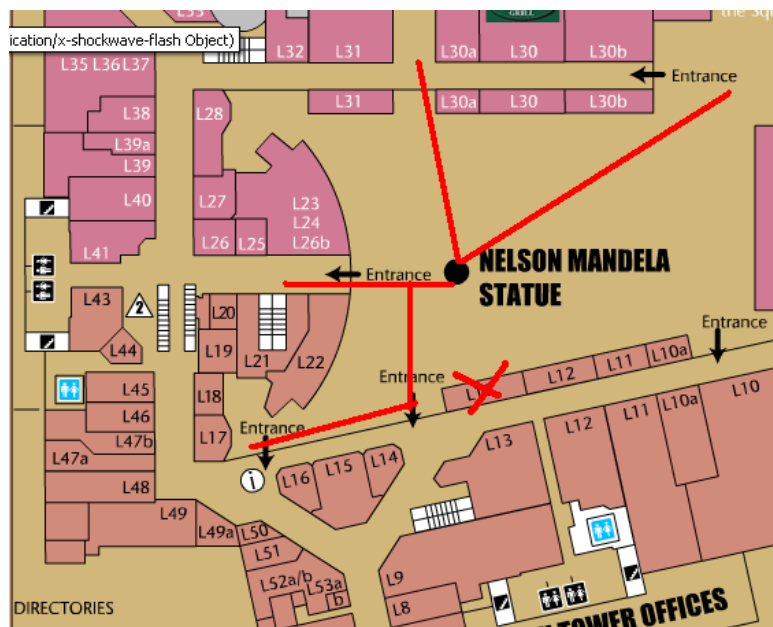


Figure 3.3.6. Nelson Mandela Square

I observed individuals moving from various entrances towards the Nelson Mandela Statue as well as MMT activity in *Baglios* Restaurant (marked with the red X).

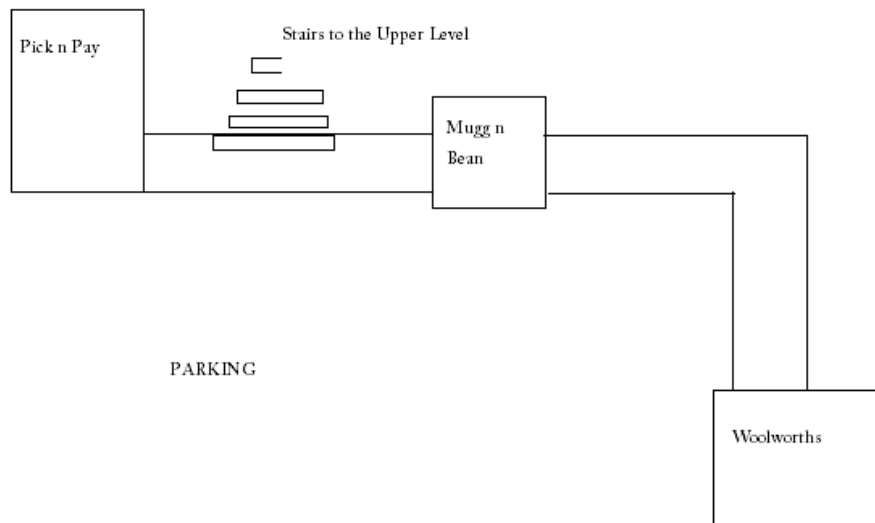


Figure 3.3.7. Market Square

This is a rough sketch of the spaces that I chose to observe. I conducted observations in the *Mugg and Bean* and in the spaces from *Woolworths* to *Pick n Pay*. I also observed the staircase up to the gym (on the upper level) from the *Mugg and Bean*.

3.3.2 METHODOLOGY

In order to record my observations I kept a fieldwork diary and made notes as I observed various key elements of my research. What I was looking for in each shopping mall was:

1. The prevalence of MMT's;
2. The usage of MMT's;
3. Evidence of liminality in terms of 'the wait';
4. Evidence of liminality in term of 'the journey';
5. Evidence of habitual behaviour;
6. Evidence of MMT's as an overt sign of an individuals identity;

7. Evidence of the evasive nature of MMT's;
8. Evidence of annoyance with regards to the usage of MMT's;
9. Evidence of MMT's encroaching on interaction.

In some cases I would tick various boxes whenever I saw a particular behaviour such as liminality, whilst in others I would elaborate on what I was observing. For the most part however, my records were descriptive and interpretive rather than being accurate quantitative records.

3.3.3 LIMITATIONS

As with most ethnographic studies, and indeed studies that incorporate ethnographic principles, time is always a major limitation. The fact that I conducted observations in three different provinces meant that it was difficult to do a thorough investigation of all three shopping malls in the limited time frame available to me. As a result the data that I collected from Market Square and Sandton City/Nelson Mandela Square serve primarily as comparative data because Market Square has relatively low MMT usage whilst Sandton City/Nelson Mandela Square has a very high MMT usage.

Another limitation is that as an observer it is impossible to be everywhere at once and so it is impossible to give any sort of quantitative data. As a result my data is descriptive and impressionistic rather than an account of specific numbers.

Finally any interpretive research has limitations because the nature of interpretation is such that it is not a fixed or accurate discipline. However despite the fact that interpretation is not scientific and is limited to one person's account it is impossible to conduct any social observation without it. Thus coupled with literature it is an effective way in which to analyse data.

3.4. FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS

Having done a number of observations I designed a set of interview questions¹² based on what I had observed as well as from information gained from my preliminary questionnaires. I separated my interviews into questions relating to the public space of the shopping mall, questions relating to MMT's, questions relating to identity and finally questions relating to social behaviour and interaction.

3.4.1 METHODOLOGY

Initially I wanted to ask the questions in the shopping mall environment itself, but I found this to be an almost impossible task because generally people do not want to be disturbed when they are shopping. The few individuals that would talk to me were abrupt and their comments obscure and as a result it became very difficult to get any sense of the terrain in which I was working. It was after this that I realised that context does not determine the nature of ones responses; on the contrary most people were more inclined to speak to me when I wasn't interfering with their time or their "shopping experience". Thus I conducted interviews outside of the shopping mall environment.

I interviewed random individuals at The University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Pietermaritzburg, The Hilton Hotel in Hilton and individuals that I met through friends in Johannesburg and Plettenberg Bay. However I also interviewed acquaintances and friends because they were much more inclined to spend time on the interviews.

The questions were designed to:

1. Gauge how MMT's and identity are linked;
2. Gauge what MMT's individuals would like to own and why;
3. Analyse where and why people use particular MMT's in shopping malls, and to explore this in terms of liminality;

¹² See Appendix 2

4. Analyse how people feel when they are in shopping malls;
5. Analyse how people feel about MMT usage in public;
6. Analyse how people feel about their own MMT usage in public;
7. Find out if the respondents have noticed any visible changes in the shopping mall environment in the last couple of years;
8. Analyse what is happening to social interaction as a result of MMT usage.

3.4.2 LIMITATIONS

The limitations to my interviews were very similar to those explored in 3.3.3. The fact that I could only interview a certain number of people in the time given meant that my data is somewhat limited however this is the nature of this kind of research project.

3.5. FACEBOOK

Although the face-to-face interviews were relatively thorough I felt that utilising *Facebook*¹³ would help me to get even more thorough and extensive data. Generally people who answer questions by writing them down tend to give very systematic answers because of the nature of written text. I created a group 'Help Jaqui Hiltermann with her Masters: A Facebook First!' and invited my group of friends to join. Those friends then invited their friends and as a result of this "snowballing" I ended up with a mixture of 39 acquaintances and 30 strangers.

¹³ Facebook is a social utility that enables individuals to communicate with individuals over the Internet. For more information go to <http://www.facebook.com>

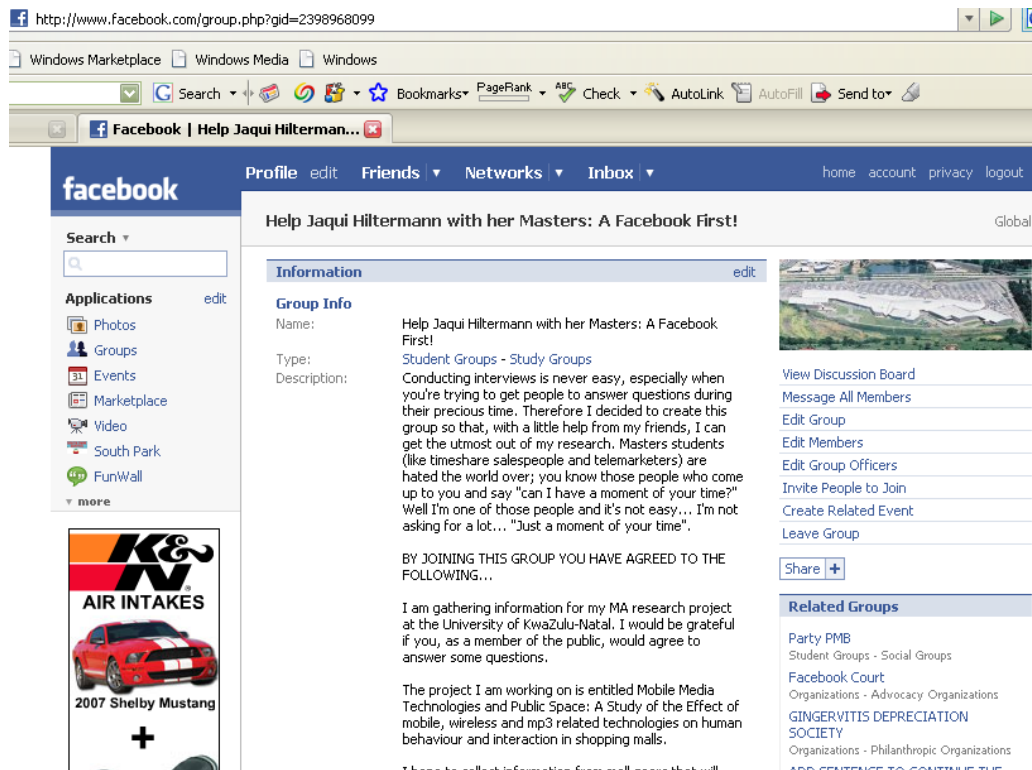


Figure 3.4.1 Facebook Group Page

3.5.1 PROCESS

The *Facebook* group 'Help Jaqui Hiltermann with her Masters: A Facebook First!' is a relatively informal group in order to gain maximum participation from its members. My aim was to create a group that people wanted to be a part of and for the most part the responses that I got were intelligently thought out and very valuable to my study.

The questions that I asked on *Facebook* were the same as the ones that I asked during my face-to-face interviews. However, because they were not spontaneous, the opportunity to post additional questions meant that I could constantly review topics that I felt needed further exploration.

I found that this was an ideal format in which to interview people because they could answer my questions in their own time and I found that the answers I received were generally better thought out and exploratory.

3.5.2 LIMITATIONS

Facebook was a useful tool because, although I know slightly more than half of the group in person there were a large number of members who I did not know personally. This snowball effect proved useful because it enabled me to extend the group beyond my circle of acquaintances.

Perhaps the biggest limitation to using *Facebook* as a method for collecting data is the fact that the majority of users have media savvy and therefore it is assumed that they will know more about MMT's than the average shopper. However I would argue that the '*Facebook* generation' is such that it celebrates emergent culture and for the most part the people who use MMT's (especially the iPod) the most are the youth. Generally the emergent youth culture are the people who have the most interest in accumulating MMT's and so speaking to the youth directly was a valuable and insightful exercise. Apart from these limitations I also had to be aware of the fact that individuals were more likely to over-emphasise points or over-exaggerate for effect but I have acknowledged this in my data analysis.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Conducting observational research is always fraught with ethical considerations not least because of the problematic power inherent in "the gaze" which Schroeder states signifies a psychological relationship of power, in which the gazer is superior to the object of the gaze' (1998: 208). The fact that I was doing simple observations as a covert researcher meant that I could not get the consent of the individuals that I was observing. However, like the Baudelarian *flaneur*, I too was in a public environment looking at people who are aware that

they are, in a sense, on display. The fact that an individual goes to the shopping mall at all means that he/she is implicitly consenting to the fact that they will, at some stage or other, be observed by another whether as a research subject or as another face in the crowd. At no stage in my research do I refer to specific individuals and my research subjects have their anonymity intact. The most important thing is the fact that I was not looking at individuals per se but rather patterns of behaviour.

Everyone who completed a questionnaire signed a consent form as did those whom I interviewed¹⁴ (and I assured them that there would be no coercion involved in that if they did not want to answer questions they did not have to). Obviously in terms of those who participated through *Facebook* it was impossible for them to sign a consent form. However by joining the group each member was consenting to be a part of my research project and I stipulated this agreement on the group page.

BY JOINING THIS GROUP YOU HAVE AGREED TO THE FOLLOWING...

I am gathering information for my MA research project at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I would be grateful if you, as a member of the public, would agree to answer some questions.

The project I am working on is entitled Mobile Media Technologies and Public Space: A Study of the Effect of mobile, wireless and mp3 related technologies on human behaviour and interaction in shopping malls.

I hope to collect information from mall goers that will help me to understand what role mobile media technologies play in everyday life.

I would like to ask you questions which you may or may not choose to answer throughout the next four months. Once my masters is complete I will delete this group. I will not try to force you to answer any questions against your will and will not use your name in my research report. You are free to withdraw from this group at any time. Once my research is complete I will destroy the notes I have made and the group that I have created.

If you have further questions after the interview, you may contact me or my supervisor at any time. Our telephone numbers are as follows: Ms Jaqui Hiltermann 0832346681; Prof. Anton van der Hoven (supervisor): 033 260 5304.

Thank you.

Share +

Related Groups

Party PMB
Student Groups - Social Groups

Facebook Court
Organizations - Advocacy Organizations

GINGERVITIS DEPRECIATION SOCIETY
Organizations - Philanthropic Organizations

ADD SENTENCE TO CONTINUE THE STORY
Entertainment & Arts - Books & Literature

Wooden Ducks Make Crap Gifts
Common Interest - Beliefs & Causes

Group Type edit

This is an open group. Anyone can join and invite others to join.

Admins

- Jaqui Hiltermann (creator)

Figure 3.6.1. Facebook Consent Agreement

¹⁴ See Appendix 3

At the end of my dissertation I deleted the *Facebook* group and all of my data has been submitted to the department for storage in archives until 2010.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In terms of my data analysis it is important to take the two different strands of thought, regarding arguments about MMT's and everyday life, into account. I have explored both modernity and postmodernity at length in my literature review but for the purposes of this chapter I am looking at how "modern" and "postmodern" sensibilities view MMT usage in public space. The tension between the two strands centres around the "modern view" that sees MMT's as separate from and disruptive to life within public space and the "postmodern view" that sees MMT's as central to and often an extension of ourselves in public as well as private space.

Through my observations and interviews my aim is to analyse these different strands in relation to the postmodern space of the shopping mall as well as how we behave and construct our identities within this space. My role within this space was that of 'observer' and I place a great deal of emphasis on the space in which I was conducting my observations. The data that I collected is then analysed alongside my interviews in order to explore the "postmodern" as well as "modern" or conventional strands of thought.

4.2. ANALYSIS OF THE PRELIMINARY QUESTIONNAIRE

I conducted my preliminary research in order to gauge my field of study and to assess whether or not my initial ideas in the field could validate a thorough research project.

I asked 52 respondents to answer my questionnaires which were designed around MMT usage and prevalence, MMT's in public space, and ideas of MMT functionality versus MMT design.

The first section of questions in the questionnaire related to demographic data; age, sex, and income bracket. I asked individuals about their income because I thought that income might be a significant variable in MMT ownership and behaviour. My sample of individuals was relatively random in terms of age and income group however I did specifically ask 26 males and 26 females to fill in my questionnaires.

Below are graphs and tables that illustrate my findings in terms of the fifty two respondents that I asked to complete my questionnaires.

4.2.1. MMT USAGE

In this section of the questionnaire I was looking at the prevalence of MMT's, *how* individuals use these specific MMT's and whether they take these MMT's to shopping malls. These were important questions because I needed to know if my study was feasible: were people using MMT's in malls and were they using them in the ways that I imagined.

Initially I thought that gender would be an important theme in my research, owing to the work of Jasper and Hu (2004). However once I had analysed these preliminary questionnaires I realised that although gender is an interesting area of study it was not directly relevant to the research concerns of this dissertation. Rather, I felt the need to make a note of the fact that certain behaviours are gender specific and therefore I took this into account when I analysed certain behaviours.

My preliminary study indicated a high percentage of MMT ownership. Out of the fifty two respondents 100% have cellular phones; this was regardless of their income. 62% of women and 73% of men have laptops and have access to, or use wireless Internet. Finally 77% of men and just 50% of women have mp3 players or iPods. The respondents who have laptops and mp3 players/iPods

were either in the very high to high income bracket or were given these MMT's as gifts. Some respondents with laptops were given them by the company for which they work.

From the data it is impossible to assume that men are more likely to own and use mp3 players and laptops but what it does make clear is the prevalence of MMT's and the fact that my study is a worthwhile one owing to the percentage of people who own MMT's in a small sample group.

	Men	Women
Percentage with cellphones	100	100
Percentage with laptops/wireless Internet	73	62
Percentage with mp3 players/iPods	77	50

Figure 4.2.1. Percentages of men & women who own MMT's

The next question asked was whether or not individuals frequent the mall by themselves and what MMT's they are likely to take with them. Only four of the respondents claimed that they never/seldom frequent the mall by themselves. However I think that this is slightly inaccurate and through analysing this aspect of my questionnaire I realised that I should have re-worded the question to ask whether respondents would *prefer* to go to the mall by themselves or with company. As a result I included this question in a number of my later interviews.

54% of men claimed that they never go to the mall without their cellphone whilst 73% of women claimed that they never go to the mall without their cellphone. The fact that this question asked individuals if they *never* go to the mall without cellphones meant that the percentages were quite low especially in the case of the men. In later tables these percentages do not correlate owing to the fact that most individuals prefer to carry their cellphones rather than never leaving home without it.

38% of men and 35% of women use Internet hotspots at shopping malls and whilst this is a low percentage it does indicate usage (in a small sample group) and therefore justifies my observations.

31% of men and 23% of women use mp3 players/iPods whilst shopping. Again this is a low percentage but it does show usage and what was interesting is that I observed different levels of usage in the three different shopping malls.

	With a cellphone	Without a cellphone
No. of women who frequent the mall alone	16	7
No. of women who seldom/never frequent the mall alone	3	0
No. of men who frequent the mall alone	13	11
No. of men who never/seldom frequent the alone	1	1

Figure 4.2.2. No. of men & women who go to malls alone & whether or not they carry cellphones with them

	Yes	No
Men using Internet hotspots in malls	10	16
Women using Internet hotspots in malls	9	17
Men using mp3 players/iPods whilst shopping	8	18
Women using mp3 players/iPods whilst shopping	6	20

Figure 4.2.3. No. of men & women who use various MMT's in shopping malls

When I asked individuals what they do when they are waiting in a coffee shop or restaurant the majority of people indicated that they will immediately phone the person that they are waiting for. Quite a large percentage said that they will take

out their cellphone and to a lesser extent individuals said that they would fiddle with something on the table. The table does not add up to 100% because many individuals indicated that they perform more than one of these acts in this particular situation. This indicates a high prevalence of MMT's as well as a high usage of MMT's in public space and therefore these questions validated areas of my study.

	% that will phone the person that they are waiting for	% that will take out their cellphone	% that will fiddle with something
Men	88%	54%	31%
Women	69%	50%	31%

Figure 4.2.4 What people will do when they are waiting in a coffee shop/restaurant

4.2.2. MMT'S AND PUBLIC SPACE

In this section I wanted to assess if the shopping mall is a significant public space for individuals and if individuals spend time at them frequently or infrequently. I also wanted to look at some of the ways that MMT's are being used in public space and whether or not this usage causes annoyance owing to how people feel about the space. If the shopping mall is a significant public space the likelihood of individuals feeling annoyed in certain areas is likely to increase and I wanted to explore whether or not this could be investigated further.

When I asked individuals how often they frequent shopping malls and whether or not they enjoy the experience, 35% of the 26 males that answered my questionnaires claimed that they do not enjoy the experience. On the other hand, out of the 26 females that I interviewed only 19% claimed that they do not enjoy the experience. Despite the fact that a large number of women frequent the shopping mall more than twice a week it is interesting to note that a great number of men frequent the mall at least once a week, if not twice. Thus, despite the fact that Morris (1999) argues that the shopping mall is centred around women, this is not clearly supported by my preliminary data. However this would have to be

supported by further evidence and here there is opportunity for further research at a later stage.

	Men	Women
More than twice per week	0	7
Twice per week	6	3
Once a week	4	9
Once a fortnight	8	6
Once a month	8	1

Figure 4.2.5. Average number of visits to the mall by men & women

	Men	Women
No. who enjoy the experience	17	21
No. who do not enjoy the experience	9	5

Figure 4.2.6. Whether or not men & women enjoy the shopping experience

In these next subsections my aim was to look at how MMT's are being used in public space and how people are reacting towards this usage. Here I was specifically looking for features such as annoyance that had been brought to my attention by theorists such as Woong Ki Park and Lemish and Cohen (2005). Finally I wanted to explore whether the majority of respondents expressed annoyance or if a significant number of people were "immune" to MMT usage. From the graph below it can be seen that most of the respondents said that the cinema is the most inappropriate place to use MMT's. (Again it is important to note that some respondents marked two or more areas as equally inappropriate and therefore the graph does not add up to 52 responses).

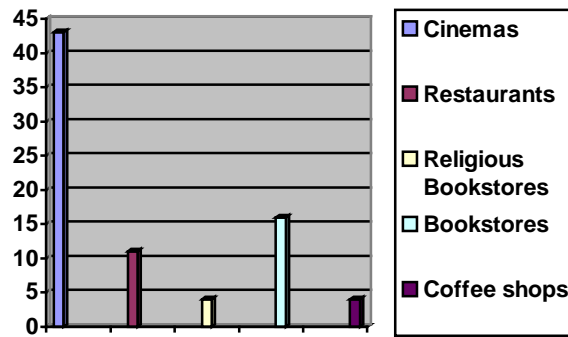


Figure 4.2.7. Places in the shopping mall that are most inappropriate to use MMT's

On the other hand, when I asked where it was least inappropriate to use MMT's the respondents recorded in the graph below show that although clothing, grocery and music stores ('others' marked on the graph) are the least inappropriate places to use MMT's, coffee shops are also relatively appropriate with many respondents saying that the whole purpose of coffee shops was to be able to use MMT's at ones leisure. (Again the graph does not add up to 52 because some of the respondent marked two or more places as least inappropriate).

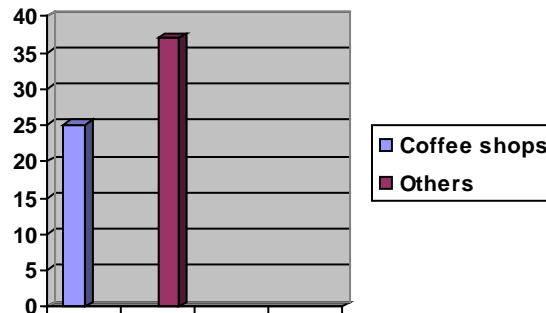


Figure 4.2.7. Places in the shopping mall that are the least inappropriate to use MMT's

The final question I asked in this subsection was whether or not individuals are annoyed by MMT usage in certain areas of the shopping mall and out of the 52 respondents 60% indicated that they are annoyed when people use MMT's in places like the cinema, restaurants, bookstores and even to a certain extent

coffee shops. What is interesting is that 12% of respondents said that they weren't annoyed but then followed this by saying things like 'but it depends on the situation' or 'but it depends if they're discreet or not'. I would argue that this basically means that they get annoyed but are trying to justify their own usage of MMT's in the above situations, because all of these respondents admitted to using MMT's in such situations. What this indicates is that people are self-conscious about their usage of MMT's and do realise the invasive nature of MMT's in public space and therefore pretend that they are not annoyed in order to justify their own behaviour. Whilst this suggests a type of hypocrisy I would argue that it is more a case of individuals having an ambiguous relationship with their MMT's and their own usage. I explore this notion further but it is important to realise that there is a tension that exists between the "modern" idea that individuals should not use MMT's in certain public spaces and the "postmodern" notion that individuals are free to use MMT's anywhere they want. What complicates this issue, and where the ambiguity comes into play, is through the fact that the break between modernity and postmodernity has not quite happened and thus, in some instances, we are in a space where our mindsets are not quite fully established.

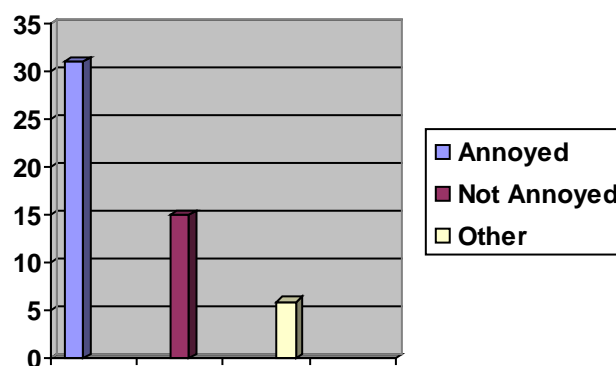


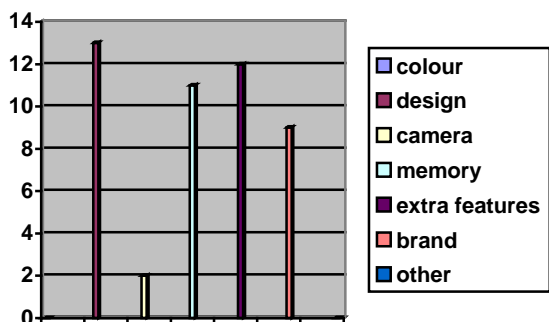
Figure 4.28 Number of respondents who are annoyed by MMT usage in certain areas of the shopping mall

4.2.3 MMT FUNCTIONALITY VERSUS MMT DESIGN

The purpose of this section of my initial questionnaire was to analyse whether or not there was potential for research using Goffman's ideas on 'identity display' (1972) and how cellphones as well as other MMT's may be used in such display. Although the survey reveals gender differences and the results show that men and women do look for different things in technologies, as we do when it comes to fashion, this did not affect my study because my preliminary research shows that there is room to explore identity construction through MMT's.

From the graphs below these gender differences can be seen because it is clear that men and women have different priorities when it comes to the features that they look for in a cellphone. For example 9 women indicated that colour was an important design feature yet none of the men indicated that this was important. However this would have to be validated through further observation and interviews. From the outset these responses indicate the fact that cellphones can be linked to identity formation and this was an idea that needed further exploration through my observations and interviews.

Men



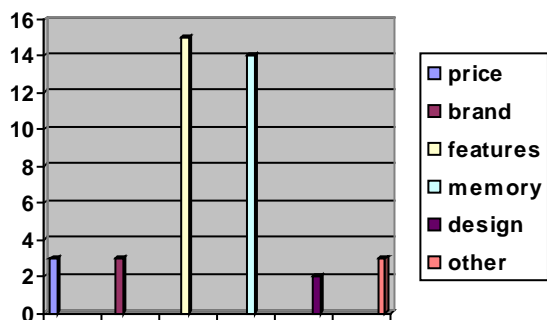
Women



Figure 4.2.9 What features men & women look for in a cellphone

From the graphs below it can be seen that with regards to features and design men and women look for different things when it comes to choosing a laptop. However, this would also have to be substantiated through observations and interviews, but again it does suggest that there are gender differences that may have some influence on the MMT's that people use and also how they serve as part of an individual's identity.

Men



Women

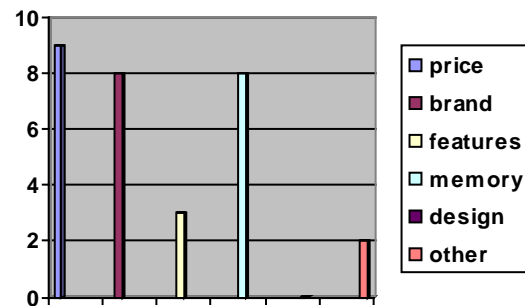


Figure 4.2.10. What features men & women look for in a laptop

Finally, when I asked the 52 individuals whether or not they believed there to be any difference between the Apple iPod and other mp3 players 62% of males and just 54% of females said that there were differences. However, what I noticed in my later research was that individuals were not being completely truthful in their responses to this question because their reasons for saying that there was no difference were very superficial. Many said things like 'an mp3 player is an mp3 player, it basically plays music and that's it.' What they failed to note were the stylistic features and the design of the iPod which became significant in my later research.

4.2.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THE PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

My pilot questionnaire was very useful to my research because it allowed me to define my field of research. In terms of MMT usage and prevalence I found that there was enough evidence to further an investigation of what MMT's are being used in public space and how they are being used. The 52 respondents that I asked to participate in my questionnaire, own and demonstrate use in certain circumstances and this allowed me to focus my research on certain aspects that I found to be interesting.

In terms of public space my questionnaire results indicate that the shopping mall is a significant public space and that people do frequent it often enough to validate my using it as the space in which to conduct my study. It was also useful because it gave me insight into the places that I should observe reactions to MMT usage and where it is likely to cause more annoyance.

Finally this preliminary research showed that both style and functionality are important with regards to MMT's and therefore I could explore this in greater depth in my observations and interviews.

4.3 OBSERVATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

I have described my observations in some detail in my methodology. I conducted 15 hours of observations over a week period at both the Market Square and Sandton City/Nelson Mandela Square and 30 hours over a two week period at the Liberty Midlands Mall.

Once I had gathered the information from my preliminary questionnaires I was able to construct a set of detailed interview questions based on my preliminary findings as well as being more informed as to where I should conduct my observations within the various shopping malls. I conducted a series of face-to-

face interviews as well as interviews on my *Facebook* group 'Help Jaqui Hiltermann with her masters: a Facebook first!'

I have chosen to analyse my observational data alongside my interviews because the data supports each other. Both the observations and interviews have been divided into the various sections that my dissertation addresses in order to analyse it in a manner that is coherent and systematic. The level of MMT engagement varied significantly between the three malls and my analysis is largely descriptive because, as I mentioned in my research methodology, I was unable to do significant quantitative analysis because as a single observer it is impossible to be everywhere at once.

4.3.1 PREVALENCE AND USE OF MMT'S IN SHOPPING MALLS

In this section I record the use of iPods/mp3 players, wireless Internet and cellphones at each of the three shopping malls. In each sub-section I explain what I observed at each shopping centre and then follow the observations with interviews. In the interviews I asked questions about what MMT's various respondents own, what MMT's they would like to own and where they use their various MMT's. I also asked questions about how they felt about the usage of certain MMT's in shopping centres.

4.3.1.1 MP3's AND IPODS

The population of Plettenberg Bay is one that follows the pattern common to holiday towns in that it is very much determined by seasonality owing to the number of tourists that frequent the town. As a result, there are certain periods where there is an influx of people and therefore the disposable income of the populous differs from season to season. My observations took place during the quiet season and during the week that I spent observing I noticed that the prevalence of mp3 players and iPods was relatively low. In total I spent 15 hours

conducting my observations and out of these 5 hours were spent at the *Mugg and Bean* where I had a clear view of people on the way to the gym as well as on the way to *Woolworths*. I also spent 5 hours in the gym itself conducting observations owing to the fact that there was mp3 and iPod usage as well as the fact that it has an Internet Café inside it. Finally I spent the rest of my time conducting observations along the walkways of the shopping centre. Most of the people using mp3's were in the gym or on the way to the gym.

	Mp3 usage on the way to gym	Mp3 usage in the gym	Mp3 usage between the <i>Mugg & Bean</i> and <i>Woolworths</i>
Cases observed	3	4	4

Figure 4.3.1. Mp3 player usage at Market Square

Estimated age of individual	Female +- 13-19	Male +- 13-19	Female +- 20-29	Male +- 20-29	Female +30's	Male +30's
	2	3	4	1	1	0

Figure 4.3.2. Estimated age of individuals observed using mp3 players at Market Square

Sandton City/Nelson Mandela Square is an ideal space in which to observe, owing to the very high prevalence and usage of MMT's. I spent 15 hours conducting observations throughout the week and in the various spaces within the mall. I spent 7.5 hours at *Baglios* restaurant where I had a very good vantage point in that I could see a large area of the square as well as the steps near the Nelson Mandela statue. In the 7.5 hours that I spent conducting my observations I observed 58 cases where individuals were listening to mp3 players whilst walking though the square or relaxing on the steps near the Nelson Mandela statue. Examples of mp3 usage were significantly lower in Sandton City itself with

only 14 cases observed during my 7.5 hours of observations within the various spaces of the mall.

	Walking through NM Square	Sitting on steps near NM Statue	Restaurants coffee shops in NM Square	Mugg & Bean Sandton City	Food Court Sandton City	Woolworths Sandton City	Walking around Sandton City
Cases observed	23	30	5	1	3	1	9

Figure 4.3.3. Mp3 player usage at Sandton City/Nelson Mandela Square

Estimated age of Individual	Female -12	Male -12	Female +-13-19	Male +- 13-19	Female +- 20-29	Male +-20-29	Female +30's	Male +30's
	1	3	14	18	10	19	1	6

Figure 4.3.4. Estimated age of individuals observed using mp3 players at Sandton City/Nelson Mandela Square

The prevalence of mp3 players was surprisingly high at Liberty Midlands Mall. In the two weeks that I spent observing (30 hours in total) I noted 23 cases where people were listening to mp3 players or iPods.

Outside *Exclusive Books* I saw a man in his mid-fifties listening to his iPod and when I questioned him he told me that he was listening to academic work that a colleague had given him. I spent 5 hours in total in the *Mugg and Bean* and during this time I observed a young boy in his school uniform listening to an mp3 player whilst he sat with his mother and her friend. The other individuals were mainly teenagers and young adults milling around the mall.

	Outside Entrance 1	Between Woolworths & Ninos	Outside Exclusive Books	In Musica	In the Food Court	In the Mugg & Bean	Between Entrance 2 & the Food Court
Cases Observed	1	5	1	1	9	2	4

Figure 4.3.5. Mp3 player usage at Liberty Midlands Mall

Estimated age of individual	Female -12	Male -12	Female +-13-19	Male +- 13-19	Female +- 20-29	Male +-20-29	Female +30's	Male +30's
	1	2	6	8	2	3	0	1

Figure 4.3.6. Estimated age of individuals observed using mp3 players at Liberty Midlands Mall

At the three shopping malls there was certainly evidence that people are utilising their mp3 players/iPods whilst they shop. Most of the individuals were between the ages of 13 and 29 which suggests that mp3's and iPod's have been culturally assimilated predominantly by the youth.

When I interviewed individuals I found that more than half of the respondents had mp3 players or iPods. Out of the 80 people that I asked, either through face-to-face interviews or through *Facebook*, 59% owned iPods or mp3 players. (Out of these individuals only 2% of them were above the age of 45 and this correlates to what I observed during my observations.)

I interviewed 50 individuals through *Facebook* and face-to-face interviews about their own iPod/mp3 usage. I asked individuals when they listen to, or where they would listen to their mp3/iPod if they have/had one. The results were as follows.

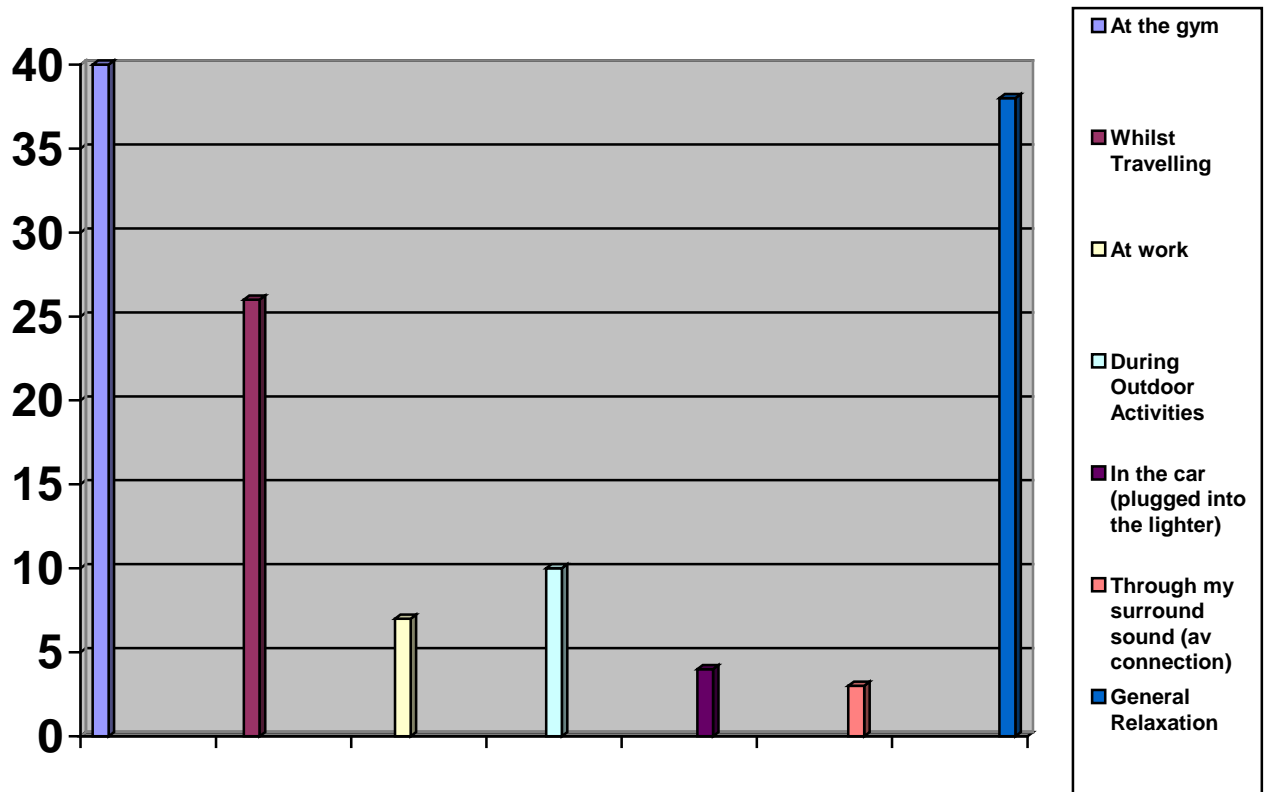


Figure 4.3.7. Where/When interviewees listen to their iPod's/mp3 players

As I have previously mentioned there are two conflicting views regarding MMT usage in public space, the “modern” and the “postmodern”. Much of the criticism around mp3 player usage in public space centres around notions of “anti-social” behaviour and this is important because it highlights how individuals with a “modern” sensibility feel about the so-called “intrusion” of MMT’s on their space. Out of the 50 individuals that I interviewed more than half of the respondents said that it is anti-social to listen to one’s iPod/mp3 in certain places and that they would rather use it whilst doing solitary activities like going to gym. (As with the previous graphs certain individuals picked more than one activity so the graph adds up to more than 50 responses.)

When asked whether he/she would ever listen to his/her mp3 or iPod whilst shopping, 77% of respondents said no. Their reasons were mostly associated with anti-social and isolated behaviour. Points of view such as, ‘No! Never! I want

to pay attention to all the stuff going on, other people's conversations and of course all that cheesy music they play in shops; especially over Christmas. I also love the *Mr Price* Radio that they play in the stores with staff dedications and such, like, "This is from Miranda in the Bluff Store..." iPods are great but they're not for shopping', and 'No, it's just a weird personal thing' indicate the fact that individuals like to be involved with their surroundings and pay attention to what is happening around them. The first individual is not criticising the iPod as such, but rather the fact that they shouldn't be used whilst shopping and this is indicative of the "modern" point of view which suggests there is a place for the iPod, just not in public space. However on the other hand responses like, 'No, because that would be so completely anti-social and I'd look like one of those weird Dungeons and Dragons people,' express an altogether different point of view whereby there is almost a moral attack on the people who do use these particular MMT's whilst shopping.

Those who do (or would) listen to iPods or mp3 players in the shopping mall said that they would do so in order to distract them from the environment or from the people around them. Such distractions come in the form of listening to these MMT's to avoid listening to ambient noise: 'I guess I would. Mall Radio is so amazingly irritating! All they ever seem to play is pop chart hits that stick in your head all day' as well as serving as decoys to avoid people; 'I always take my iPod with me even if I'm not listening to it I pretend I am, that way I avoid awkward conversations with those random people that you meet at the mall'. However there are also more practical reasons such as, 'I'm an incredibly busy person so I need my iPod at all times so that I can brush up on my Spanish when I need to and listen to conference material' that indicate the the iPod/mp3 player is not just for distraction.

Although many of the responses that I received were very self-conscious, their basic position is the same. In most of the cases where I interviewed people (be it face-to-face or through *Facebook*) the responses were often exaggerated or

expressed humorous undertones for effect. What this means is that hyperbole is present but one can be assured of their basic position which is either 'yes' or 'no'.

As an observer one cannot make claims as to why people are behaving in a certain way but clues through my observations have lead me to believe that some of the reasons for listening to iPods or mp3 players in public may be attributed to boredom or if individuals are waiting for something or someone. In 7 cases throughout my observations I observed individuals listening to their mp3 players for a while and then standing up to leave with someone, taking out their earphones immediately. In other cases, for example the young boy waiting for his mum to finish chatting to her friend at the *Mugg and Bean*, it appeared to be a diversion for him and at one point he asked her if they were going to be much longer. However it is not only *why* individuals are behaving in certain ways but also *how* this behaviour is affecting other people in public space that interests me.

Already there is a clear sign of the two opposite strands that exist in public space. The "modern" strand expresses disdain and moral judgement at those who use mp3 players/iPods in public and use terms like "weird" or "antisocial" to describe these MMT users and the "postmodern" strand that advocates the "iPod Generation". Those with a more "postmodern" view, who use their iPods/mp3 players in a very hyper-individualistic way, are essentially "postmodern" and celebrate a new type of individuality that allows for a greater freedom of expression than that of the modernist strand.

4.3.1.2 WIRELESS INTERNET

In the Market Square *Mugg and Bean* there were seldom cases where people were using their laptops and making use of the wireless Internet facility. During the 5 hours in my week of observations I observed only 4 cases where people were using laptops. I believe that the reason for this is because of the fact that

Plettenberg Bay is not a corporate town and therefore the need to utilise the Internet for business communication and so forth is relatively low.

At Sandton City/Nelson Mandela Square I was looking for laptop/wireless Internet usage in two places, the *Mugg and Bean* in Sandton City itself and *Baglios* at the Nelson Mandela Square. I spent 2.5 hours observing at the *Mugg and Bean* and 7.5 hours at *Baglios* during my week of observation. The prevalence and usage of laptops and wireless Internet was high. Whilst there is not an Internet hotspot at *Baglios* there were a number of people who communed around a laptop to have business meetings and on four occasions I observed individuals using their cellphones or Vodaphone/MTN wireless cards in order to connect to the Internet. At the *Mugg and Bean* I observed 13 cases where individuals were utilising the Internet hotspot.

At the Liberty Midlands Mall both *Panarottis* and *Mugg and Bean* have Internet hotspots but I decided to locate my observations in the *Mugg and Bean* because it is a coffee shop rather than a restaurant. During my 2 week observational period I spent 5 hours in the *Mugg and Bean* and saw 12 people using their laptops. I would suggest that this number is quite low because of the limited time that I spent at the *Mugg and Bean* over the entire 30 hour period. Out of the 12 individuals 8 were businessmen, 1 was a female high school student, and three were women between the ages of 20 and 30.

Out of the 80 individuals that I interviewed through *Facebook* or face-to-face 80% of individuals owned laptops and out of these 70% utilised wireless Internet. All of the people who did not own a laptop wanted to own one. Surprisingly only 20% of the individuals that I asked, utilise Internet hotspots at malls regularly. Most said that they had their own access and didn't need to go to the mall to utilise it.

Although it is not directly associated with laptop and wireless Internet usage in shopping malls what I found fascinating was the fact that out of the twenty

individuals that I asked, 60% of them had *Skype*¹⁵ and use it on a regular basis. However all of the individuals said that they would never “Skype” from a coffee shop or in a public space owing to the fact that it looks “nerdy” and “antisocial”. One individual said, ‘I would never use *Skype* in a coffee shop because I’d have to sit there with those silly headphones... actually even if I had my *Skype* phone I wouldn’t use it. It’s not like a cellphone, it’s different, and I don’t know why’.

When we explored the issue I asked him if he would use *Skype* in a coffee shop if he was in a group and they were all participating he said, ‘That’s different because then you have the whole group to validate your behaviour. In groups you have a lot more confidence and don’t really care if you look like an idiot, cos you all look like idiots together’.

Finally when I asked the 20 respondents if they would use *Skype* in public if there was a designated *Skype* area or if everyone else was doing it they all said that they would consider it.

The prevalence and usage of laptops in shopping malls is not particularly high and although individuals are comfortable using cellphones in public space they are not comfortable using *Skype* as a tool to communicate with as yet.

Out of the individuals that I observed most were businessmen and women who were conducting business lunches. However there were a couple of cases where individuals were merely accessing the Internet for their own personal use. When it comes to using laptops in a manner that is conspicuous, for example utilising *Skype*, people are not yet comfortable. However when it comes to annoyance none was expressed by anyone that I observed, on the contrary people were completely fine with this particular MMT being used and for the most part completely oblivious to laptop usage in public space.

¹⁵ Skype is a free Internet service that allows individuals to make phonecalls to anyone in the world provided that he/she has a Skype account. The account is free and all that he/she is charged for is the cost of being logged on to the Internet.

4.3.1.3 CELLPHONES

Out of the 52 respondents that I asked to fill out my initial questionnaire 100% of them had cellphones and this percentage can be substantiated by the fact that the usage and prevalence at all of the shopping centres that I chose to observe was extremely high. What is interesting is that shops like *Pep* are now selling airtime and this indicates that even lower income brackets have access to cellphones. It is difficult to give an exact percentage of people who own cellphones; rather my aim is to illustrate how much usage I observed in terms of liminality and instances of annoyance.

At Market Square there was a relatively high prevalence of cellphones and most people were using cellphones whilst purchasing goods (such as groceries and clothes) or during a liminal transition (for example from the car park to *Pick n Pay*). However in contrast to the other two shopping malls the usage and prevalence was slightly less.

The prevalence and usage of cellphones at Sandton City/Nelson Mandela Square was extremely high. Throughout the week of observations I saw over 60 occasions where people were taking photos of the Nelson Mandela statue with their cellphones. On one occasion there was a group of about 30 school children and of these, 14 took out their cellphones to photograph the statue. At *Baglios* I saw two businessmen with more than one cellphone and a large number of people I observed chose to carry their cellphones or keep them in view rather than to put them away. At *Baglios* and the *Mugg and Bean* I noted 3 occasions where groups of people were looking at photos on a cellphone. Although it is difficult to judge exactly how many people who frequent Sandton have cellphones it is clear that there is an extremely high percentage of people who have and use cellphones in public. At *Baglios* even the waiter was on his cellphone which illustrates just how blasé we are about the use of cellphones in public.

At Liberty Midlands Mall the prevalence and usage of cellphones was also very high. What surprised me was the number of young children with cellphones, be it their own or that of their parents'. The Liberty Midlands Mall does not allow cameras and perhaps this was the result of the numerous incidents where individuals were using their cellphones in order to take photos.

Out of the 80 people that I interviewed both face-to-face and through *Facebook* 100% of people owned cellphones and out of these 6 individuals owned more than one cellphone.

When I asked individuals what MMT's they take to the shopping mall most of the respondents said that they needed their cellphone. Out of the 65 people that I asked, only 2 people said that they didn't need to take an MMT to the mall. The rest said that they had to have their cellphone with them and they gave a plethora of different reasons for needing their phones including:

- Needing to know the time because he/she does not wear a watch;
- Using the cellphone as a shopping list;
- Needing to phone home regarding groceries needed;
- 'I need my cellphone because people always freak out when they can't get hold of me so I have to take my phone. I would leave it at home just to be alone without annoying parasites of technology all over me like a rash but then I'd have to have an argument with those who expect me to be available';
- 'I take my cellphone with me everywhere for emergencies and it also makes meeting up with people a lot easier';
- 'I often get lost so I always carry my cellphone... just in case';
- 'Being my primary communication device it (my cellphone) goes everywhere with me, I feel naked without it'.

Here we can observe a typical case of "affordances" (Gibson: 1979) whereby the manufacturers of a certain technology do not anticipate the extent of the potential

uses that an individual may put the technology to¹⁶. What it also suggests is that Haddon's claims for the 'repertoire of practices' (2005) that MMT's afford us, are numerous and unprecedented. In the above cases we can see numerous repertoires that we can draw from in terms of how we choose to use our cellphones, including as a shopping list and as a kind of "Linus blanket".

Unlike iPods, mp3 players and wireless Internet no one even remarked that they feel "awkward", "antisocial" or "nerdy" when they use their cellphone in public whether in groups or by themselves. On the contrary it seems that individuals feel more comfortable and less anxious when they use their cellphone and I will explore this in more detail when I discuss liminality.

What I observed and found through my interviews was that although newer technologies such as mp3 players/iPods and wireless Internet are becoming more common in the landscape of the shopping mall they have yet to become as prevalent as the cellphone. However I do think that in the next decade their appearance in public space will be much larger. With regards to mp3 players and iPods there is still a stigma attached to their usage in public space and with regards to wireless Internet I believe that it is still too new to have made a huge impact on individuals in the shopping mall. For example the first Internet hotspot at the Liberty Midlands Mall was only introduced in the last four years.

4.3.2 PUBLIC SPACE

As I discussed in my Literature Review it is vital to study the context of an environment in any kind of new media research. Throughout my reading and my research, space has become more and more problematic because there are as many real spaces as there are imagined spaces. In his discussion of 'non-spaces', Augé (1995: 36) states that 'we have to relearn to think about space' and this relates to how we analyse the postmodern space of the shopping mall.

¹⁶ For more on affordances see Literature Review pg 44

Within the public space of the shopping mall we find numerous other spaces including non-places as described by (Auge: 1995)¹⁷, liminal spaces as identified by Katz (2003)¹⁸, “safe spaces”¹⁹, cyberspace, and private space.

On the other hand the postmodern space of the shopping mall is further problematised owing to the fact that there are two strands of thought regarding MMT usage in this space. As I have mentioned, there are the “postmodern” views which allow for an extreme freedom of expression with regards to MMT usage and “modern” views which are less flexible and express a certain disdain for usage in public space. In this section my intention is to find out how individuals behave in the shopping mall and how they use MMT’s in this environment.

4.3.2.1 MMT’S AND THE MANY SPACES OF THE SHOPPING MALL

The public space of the shopping mall as a postmodern space is a visually saturated and crowded space that revolves around hype and spectacle. Shopping centres and malls are designed in such a way as to make us completely absorbed in the environment. Owing to the extent of the usage of MMT’s within this space the result has been the incorporation of our private lives and private space into this public space. In line with this Featherstone²⁰ points out that malls encourage us to be so absorbed that we no longer experience liminality because we are in such a state of ‘childlike wonder’ (1999: 103). Yet despite the fact that he claims that individuals are unlikely to experience anything other than what the mall has to offer, the fact is the individuals with a “modern” mindset will not feel comfortable because of the extent of the visual saturation within the environment.

¹⁷ For more on ‘non-spaces see Literature Review pg 18

¹⁸ For more on ‘liminal spaces’ see Literature Review pg 20

¹⁹ For more on “safe spaces” see Literature Review pg 21

²⁰ For the full Featherstone quote see Literature Review pg 22 & 23

Thus the shopping mall appears to offer “safe spaces” (spaces and tactics that appear to eliminate liminality) and suggests to the individual that he/she is secure amidst the crowds of unknown individuals. For the “postmodern” individual it is also a *liberating* environment because of its “eclectic” nature which means that we have a myriad of choices available to us. We are able to inhabit numerous spaces at once because the postmodern space is such that we are able to walk around the mall whilst wandering through a whole new space where we can experience our desires that centre around consumption; take for example the centre of the mall where expos often take place. Whilst in the shopping mall one can look at new cars that can take one to exotic places, one can plan an imaginary wedding, one can walk through a “Christmas Wonderland” and one can engage with technologies that one can pretend to afford. These ‘non-spaces’ of the mall are interesting because although we are in the mall we are somewhere else whilst we play with our desires and imagination. The spectacle allows us to move outside the space of the mall and into a realm where we are somewhere else for as long as we can sustain our imaginations.

When I asked individuals if they have noticed any changes in the shopping mall and how people behave, in the last couple of years owing to the prevalence of MMT’s, the responses were very insightful in terms of notions of human behaviour and, in some cases, cyberspace. One respondent commented on how cyberspace has become such a significant space, ‘Yes, obviously, cyberspace is everywhere!’ On the other hand one individual just noticed the presence of the technologies without identifying the space, ‘I guess so. I spot the occasional guy (it’s always a guy!) sitting at a coffee shop with his laptop. And cellphones, well they’re everywhere with their annoying ringtones!’ What’s interesting is that this woman made the behaviour gender specific without really having any evidence to support her claim that the majority of individuals on laptops in coffee shops are men. Another respondent brought up an important aspect, the merging of private and public space. He said, ‘I’ve noticed that people are less involved with the shopping mall and more involved with their own agenda, like playing with their

phone or listening to their mp3 players. It's weird, I guess we've become more 'singular' whilst another commented that, 'People's visits to malls have become more unplanned as they will phone home to check what groceries they've actually come to buy'. She went on to say that, 'Meeting at malls is also much easier thanks to cellphones cos you don't have to 'arb' as much'. In line with this notion of 'arbing' and self-consciousness associated with being alone another individual said that, 'People use their cellphones a lot more even if they are not talking, it's a friend to go shopping with'.

From these responses it seems that as individuals we have become a lot more aware of public space and the inclusion of other spaces, particularly our personal private space, within this space. The fact that one individual noticed that our mall visits are more unplanned than they used to be indicates that whilst we are in the public space of the mall we are also able to use MMT's to revert back into private space by contacting our family and our friends. Not only can we move between public and private space, but we can also move into cyberspace by going online, playing with or using our cellphones or simply by plugging in our iPods.

4.3.2.2 LIMINALITY

Through my literature review I made clear my intention to theorise liminal spaces in terms of uncomfortable spaces rather than the liberating spaces that other postmodern theorists may argue for.

In my observations I was able to identify two liminal spaces that apply to individuals in a shopping mall that I refer to as the "wait" and the "journey". I argue that these spaces are typically uncomfortable because they are an in-between state which invokes feelings of being "in limbo" and thus individuals are more likely to feel anxious, self-conscious and uncomfortable. Through my observations and interviews my aim was to prove whether this was in fact a valid hypothesis.

Although the argument could be made that iPods and mp3 players can also be used in liminal situations I would argue that their usage is more likely to centre around isolation. Using an iPod/mp3 player purely in a liminal situation is not conducive to the design of the MMT because you have to untangle the earphones, put them in, go through your music and decide what to listen to and by the time all of this has happened you are probably likely to have arrived at your location. This is not to say that iPods are never used in liminal situations but it is very difficult, as an observer, to be certain of liminal use. For the purposes of this study I have limited my analysis of liminality to cellphones.

I will be analysing liminality in terms of habitual behaviour, anxiety and boredom.

4.3.2.2 a. THE JOURNEY

Identifying liminal examples of what I term “the journey” in terms of cellphone usage is quite a tricky process because it is difficult to gauge how many of the individuals who happen to be chatting on cellphones initiated the conversation and how many merely answered an incoming call. I only made note of individuals whom I observed initiating conversation and individuals who were fiddling or smsing off their cellphone as they were moving. As a result my numbers are less than I initially anticipated because I wanted to make sure that what I was observing was self-initiated liminality.

As an observer it was often difficult to take note of everything that was happening and this is especially true of trying to identify liminality in the true sense because you have to be observing at the exact moment that an individual utilises his/her cellphone during a liminal transition. However it is apparent that liminality is a common state and one respondent remarked, ‘people walking and yakking on their cellphones is still about 98% of what I see in shopping malls’.

MARKET SQUARE

At Market Square I was looking for instances of liminality between *Woolworths* and *Pick n Pay*. I walked along the walkways (in total 5hrs) to and from these shops and noted what I saw along the way in my fieldwork diary. In terms of the 5 hours that I spent in the *Mugg and Bean* coffee shop I had a good view of the large parking area as well as the staircase up towards the gym (which is situated on the upper level), the walkway towards *Pick n Pay* and the entrance to the toilets so it was an excellent place to observe potential liminal behaviour.

In total I observed 11 people dialing numbers and subsequently chatting on their cellphone as they moved through the parking area and towards the *Pick n Pay* or *Woolworths*, and over 30 individuals who checked their cellphone or smsed as they were walking towards the centre. In the area between *Woolworths* and *Pick n Pay* I observed 6 individuals initiating conversation through their phones and only 7 occasions where individuals smsed or fiddled with their cellphone.

SANDTON CITY/NELSON MANDELA SQUARE

As I mentioned previously both Sandton City and Nelson Mandela Square were a hub of MMT activity.

With regards to liminality I identified over 100 cases in just 4 hours in one day at Nelson Mandela Square (sitting at *Baglios*). What was interesting to note was that there were numerous people walking in groups and talking on their cellphones as they were walking through the square which suggests that liminality exists even if one is in a group situation however this would have to be explored by further research. In the one week period +-7.5 hours I observed over 150 cases of liminality.

In Sandton City I observed 63 cases (+-5hrs over the one week period) of liminality from the underground parking to *Woolworths* and from *Woolworths* to the Food Court. Again the numbers are slightly less than expected as I only

noted people who I could see initiating conversation and people who were smsing or fiddling with their phones as they were walking.

From the upper level of *Woolworths* to the *Mugg and Bean* I spent about 2.5hrs observing behaviour over the one week period and activity was slightly less with 36 cases of liminality in cases where individuals were walking past the coffee shop. In this area I mostly looked at MMT activity within the *Mugg and Bean* itself.

LIBERTY MIDLANDS MALL

From Entrance One to the area around *Woolworths* and from *Woolworths* through to the Food Court I noted 58 cases of liminality in the 15hrs that I spent conducting observations over the two week period.

From the area marked from Entrance 2 into the Food Court and *Mugg and Bean* I observed over 100 cases of liminality during about 15hrs of observation (5hrs specifically spent in *Mugg and Bean* itself) over the two week period. Quite a large number of these cases were individuals phoning their friends in relation to the cinema and where they were meeting etc., or if they were waiting at certain restaurants.

What was very surprising was the number of women that I observed using their cellphones in the toilets or on their way to the toilets. When I asked why they were using their cellphones in this area I received a range of different answers such as, 'I didn't want to be rude at the table so I excused myself to go to the loo, I didn't want to miss the sms if it was important'. However there were also some more arbitrary reasons such as, 'My phone just rang so I answered it' and 'I dunno I just sort of decided to phone my friend, I guess it's quieter?'

4.3.2.2 b. THE WAIT

As an observer it is much easier to identify instances of what I term “the wait” with regards to liminality. This is because it is very easy to identify the moment when an individual is in the process of waiting for something, be it his/her food, his/her friends or family to arrive and so forth.

MARKET SQUARE

At Market Square I looked for examples of “the wait” at the *Mugg and Bean*. During my week of observations (5hrs in total) I noted over 80 cases of individuals using cellphones whilst waiting.

Action	Instances Observed
Fiddling with cellphone whilst waiting	22
Fiddling with cellphone whilst partner is using his/her phone	9
Fiddling with cellphone if partner leaves momentarily	14
Making a phonecall whilst waiting	16
Checking cellphone whilst waiting	26

Figure 4.2.1. Evidence of “the wait” at the Mugg & Bean (Market Square)

SANDTON CITY/NELSON MANDELA SQUARE

I did not spend much time (+-1hr over the week period) observing liminality outside the *Ster Kinekor* although it was a valuable exercise.

Action	Instances Observed
Fiddling with cellphone whilst waiting	9
Making a phonecall whilst waiting	12
Checking cellphone whilst waiting	5

Figure 4.2.2. Evidence of “the wait” at the Ster Kinekor (Sandton City)

I found it relatively easy to observe liminality in the Food Court owing to the fact that there are such high volumes of people in this specific area of the mall. During the +-2.5 hours that I spent observing behaviour over the week long period this is what I found.

Action	Instances Observed
Fiddling with cellphone whilst waiting	39
Fiddling with cellphone whilst partner is using his/her phone	17
Fiddling with cellphone if partner leaves momentarily	8
Making a phonecall whilst waiting	23
Checking cellphone whilst waiting	41

Figure 4.2.3. Evidence of “the wait” in The Food Court (Sandton City)

I found that most of the people in *Mugg and Bean* (observation period 2.5hrs) were having business lunches or a coffee break whilst shopping. The MMT activity was quite high although most people were rushing so it was difficult to find people in liminal situations.

Action	Instances Observed
Fiddling with cellphone whilst waiting	25
Fiddling with cellphone whilst partner is using his/her phone	15
Fiddling with cellphone if partner leaves momentarily	4
Making a phonecall whilst waiting	9
Checking cellphone whilst waiting	19

Figure 4.2.4. Evidence of “the wait” in the *Mugg & Bean* (Sandton City)

I spent more time at *Baglios* (about 7.5 hours in total) observing behaviour owing to the fact that MMT usage at Nelson Mandela Square is so prevalent. Again I believe the prevalence is slightly less and had I more time to observe I believe that I would have observed much more incidents of this manner.

Action	Instances Observed
Fiddling with cellphone whilst waiting	34
Fiddling with cellphone whilst partner is using his/her phone	23
Fiddling with cellphone if partner leaves momentarily	18
Making a phonecall whilst waiting	29
Checking cellphone whilst waiting	27

Figure 4.2.5. Evidence of “the wait” in *Baglios* (Nelson Mandela Square)

LIBERTY MIDLANDS MALL

I spent about two hours observing liminality outside the *Cine Centre* and as a result my numbers are slightly higher than that of Sandton City.

Action	Instances Observed
Fiddling with cellphone whilst waiting	16
Making a phonecall whilst waiting	20
Checking cellphone whilst waiting	12

Figure 4.2.6. Evidence of “the wait” outside the Cine Centre (Liberty Midlands Mall)

As with Sandton City, the Food Court at the Liberty Midlands Mall is a hub of MMT activity and although it is not as big as the one at Sandton City during the two weeks (+6 hours) that I spent observing I noticed good examples of liminality.

Action	Instances Observed
Fiddling with cellphone whilst waiting	41
Fiddling with cellphone whilst partner is using his/her phone	13
Fiddling with cellphone if partner leaves momentarily	11
Making a phonecall whilst waiting	46
Checking cellphone whilst waiting	34

Figure 4.2.7. Evidence of “the wait” in the Food Court (Liberty Midlands Mall)

4.3.2.3 ANXIETY, BOREDOM AND HABITUAL BEHAVIOUR IN TERMS OF LIMINALITY

My aim is to explore anxiety, boredom and habitual behaviour in a manner that does not make them mutually exclusive. I believe that depending on the circumstance most individuals will experience elements of boredom and anxiety within public space and will often act habitually as a result.

In my Literature Review I explored Fortunati's notion that we, as human beings, construct our identity with certain tools that provide us with self assurance in public space and that ultimately this behaviour becomes habit or ritual (in Ling and Pedersen 2005: 211). However it is not only anxiety that certain individuals may experience, but also boredom if we are not stimulated or if we are waiting for someone or something. It is at this stage that we may revert to habitual behaviour because we are bored within the environment; hence we may play with our cellphones or smoke a cigarette because as Fortunati says these 'prostheses'²¹ help 'fill in the gaps or the empty moments with a precise rituality' (in Ling & Pedersen 2005: 211).

I have argued that the shopping mall is a public space fraught with binaries and contradictions and therefore in certain circumstances it is likely that most individuals will feel anxious²². This is especially true if the individual is alone in the environment and in such circumstances individuals use 'prostheses' in a ritualized manner to avoid anxiety. Ki Park states that:

The mobile phone's basic function is inherently to enable two distant parties to communicate at the same time, and basically eliminates the fundamental human anxiety regarding loneliness (Townsend: 2000).²³ Hence it is conceivable that people who exhibit some degree of loneliness might be inclined to use the mobile phone more to eliminate such anxiety (in Ling & Pedersen 2005: 259).

When I asked individuals how they felt whilst engaged in the shopping mall environment there were a range of different answers. One individual suggested, 'I feel the need to start spending my money. I love the thrill of being in the mall and being able to look at new products and having the choice to buy them or not' whilst another said, 'I wish I had more money. I just want to buy everything in

²¹ For more on 'prostheses' see Literature Review pg. 32

²² See Literature Review pg. 22

²³ Ki Park refers to Townsend's 2000 article Life in the real-time city: mobile telephones and urban metabolism in *Journal of Urban Technology*, 7, 85-104

sight. I want to buy camping stuff even though I don't camp just because I see the camping shop with all that great camping gear asking me to buy it. And then I usually buy a dress that doesn't suit me. I love shopping!' These responses illustrate many of Featherstone's (1991) ideas regarding the positive aspects of shopping and the use of words like *choice* illustrate agency. These individuals do not demonstrate any sense of anxiety but rather find shopping a positive and "thrilling" experience.

On the other hand there are those who feel anxious or uncomfortable owing to the size and nature of the environment. One respondent indicated his absolute disdain by stating, 'I feel insanely irritated by children and old people who clog up the passageways and force me to move' whilst another expressed her concern by saying, 'I feel anxious and image conscious. It's the masses of people and long aisles, people can see you from far away so you think "how's my walk? Should I have worn bigger heels? I need a tan and a haircut. She's prettier than me and why did I wear this outfit?" I know it's superficial but when everyone looks so good it's hard not to feel like an idiot!' This self-conscious attitude was not expressed by everyone and some individuals just felt overwhelmed, 'I feel bombarded by images and adverts and people. I'm a solitary being so it's really difficult to be in such a crowded space. Sometimes I need to stop for coffee before I even begin, just to calm my nerves!'

What is interesting to note is that these feelings of being overwhelmed and feeling anxious disappeared when I asked how an individual felt whilst accompanied by friends or family rather than being alone. However individuals who said that they were annoyed in the environment remarked that this was unlikely to change even if they were in company. When I asked individuals if they were more likely to spend more time at the mall if they were with company, most individuals said that they would. Those who prefer to shop alone gave responses such as:

- 'I like to shop alone if I'm buying clothes and generally I take my time and I'm very picky, but then I have a mission and I don't really focus on anything other than what I need to get done.'
- 'Alone, because I don't have my boyfriend saying 'can we go home now, I'm hungry, are we finished yet?' every two minutes, and I can decide what I want to look at and which shops to go into without worrying about anyone else but myself.'
- 'Alone so I can focus on why I'm there and it lessens the distractions.'

These individuals sound self assured and in control of the shopping process. One can clearly see that this type of individual has choices and is exercising these choices in order to make their shopping experience more enjoyable and they are also aware of the environment and its distractions.

On the other hand individuals who prefer to shop with company gave some very interesting responses such as:

- 'I like to browse with friends although it depends which friends, because some of my friends are so clueless and only shop at places like *Woolworths* and *Mr Price*. If I watch a movie or go for coffee I have to be with someone else otherwise I'd rather go home.'
- 'If I'm making a day of it I'd much rather go with company!'
- 'I would never go to a cinema alone because I don't feel comfortable doing a group activity by myself, I guess other people might think that I have no friends?'

- 'I never go shopping alone. It's much more fun to talk to someone when you're shopping and besides I always need someone to validate my purchases!'

These individuals often just prefer the company but in other cases they feel anxious or self-conscious if they are alone. From the results of my observations seen in the tables in the previous subsection it is clear that individuals are using MMT's very heavily in situations where they are waiting by themselves or have been closed off from the activities of the person/people they are with. So too are they utilising MMT's on the journey from point A to point B although, as I have mentioned, it is harder to identify the extent of this usage.

From my earlier arguments I have suggested that liminal spaces are uncomfortable spaces where an individual is in limbo and thus we are likely to feel anxious in such situations. It is at these times that we use our MMT's or other 'prostheses' and although the more conventional "modern" strand sees this behaviour as addictive I find that it is more useful to analyse this behaviour in terms of Bourdieu's anti-determinist strand which argues that we are guided by *habitus* and will revert to habitual behaviour in certain circumstances. I would argue that habitual behaviour is such that it compensates for anxiety or boredom and this is especially true if we are in liminal situations.

According to Pierre Bourdieu we are guided by habitual behaviour and we revert to this behaviour when we are anxious or bored. Bourdieu terms this as "*habitus*":

Habitus is the thing that explains how "types of behaviour can be directed towards certain ends without being consciously directed to these ends, or determined by them." "The *habitus*," he notes elsewhere, "entertains with the social world that has produced it a real ontological complicity, the source of cognition without consciousness, intentionality without intention and a practical mastery of the world's regularities which allows one to

anticipate the future, without even needing to posit it as such” (Bouveresse in Shustermann 1999: 53).

Depending on the nature of the liminal situation we will either be bored or anxious and although I noted a great deal of liminal behaviour throughout my observations, it was not always easy to identify whether individuals were experiencing boredom or anxiety. This is where my interviews helped because they helped me to explore this issue and the feeling that individuals are likely to experience whilst in postmodern space.

One individual that I interviewed expressed anxiety associated with being alone and the role that her cellphone plays in alleviating this anxiety. She said, ‘I have to have my phone with me because if I arrive early I can pretend to use it so I don’t look like Norman-no-mates.’ This is a typical example of an individual making a phonecall when in a situation that causes anxiety. Through my observations and interviews I noticed this kind of behaviour especially when individuals were moving from point A to point B. Most people that I interviewed said that in a liminal transition they were very likely to phone the person that they were to meet. Whilst individuals were waiting for someone I observed lots of fiddling with cellphones and lots of phoning yet these behaviours are not necessarily associated directly with anxiety because some people may do this if they are merely bored.

One individual that I interviewed expressed, ‘I take my cellphone with me everywhere, for two reasons; one, so that I can phone people when I’m bored and two, so I can phone people to join me for lunch when I’m skiving off work.’ According to Goffman the symptoms of boredom are often linked to ‘side-involvements’ such as smoking and I would argue that our MMT’s have become similar distractions. Goffman states that,

some symptoms of boredom suggest that the individual will make no effort to terminate the encounter or his official participation in it but that he will

no longer give as much to it. The initiation of side-involvements, such as leafing through a magazine or lighting a cigarette, are instances (1972: 27).

For some the cellphone has to some extent replaced the cigarette in terms of what individuals fiddle with when they're bored but ultimately when an individual is bored they will tend to fiddle with whatever they have at hand. Through my observations I noticed numerous individuals playing with sugar sachets, twirling their cigarette boxes and fiddling with their knives and forks, however, for the most part, the cellphone is what individuals have with them most of the time. Thus individuals are more likely to fiddle with these particular MMT's as seen from my observations.

However, as I have said, I do not believe that these distinctions in human behaviour are mutually exclusive, in some cases individuals may be somewhere in between self-assurance and anxiety depending on their mood or the nature of the situation. The response, 'I tend to use both my laptop and cellphone when I'm bored. I also use my cellphone when I feel uncomfortable in my surroundings, as almost a shield from judgement' illustrates this.

Ultimately it is clear that the behaviour of individuals is influenced heavily by both boredom and anxiety and this can be seen both from my interviews and my observations. However it is not only a case of anxiety and/or boredom that has to be considered. The matter is somewhat more complicated by "modern" thinking and "postmodern" thinking.

In terms of "the journey" individuals usually feel anxious (owing to being in limbo) and to a lesser extent boredom may be experienced. Although I observed instances of liminality during "the journey" it was more difficult to identify this specifically however I did identify enough cases for it to be significant; throughout I observed cases where individuals were either smsing, phoning or merely just checking their phones (either by touching it or glancing at it). I would argue that

touching or glancing at the cellphone is habitual behaviour that may be resultant of anxiety.

Liminality in terms of “the wait” is a typically uncomfortable state. I would argue that when someone fiddles with their cellphone or constantly checks it whilst waiting signals that they are impatient and bored or anxious for the arrival of the person that they are expecting. My observations of “the wait” were useful because throughout my 60 hours of observation I found ample evidence to support my claims on liminality in terms of anxiety, boredom and *habitus*.

Although I would argue that we are guided by habitual behaviour when in a liminal state others would argue that this is addictive or dependent behaviour. The fact that we are often not aware of our interaction with our cellphones indicates that this is not addiction but rather a symptom of habit. One respondent said that, ‘Sometimes my friends get annoyed with me because I’ll be playing with my cellphone whilst they talk to me, but I don’t even know I’m doing it so I don’t get what they’re complaining about.’ Like Bourdieu, Butler shares the anti-determinist stance which negates any sense of addiction or dependence and she says,

the body does not merely act in accordance with certain regularized or ritualized practices, but it *is* this sedimented ritual activity; its action, in this sense, is a kind of incorporated memory. Here the apparent materiality of the body is recast as a kind of practical activity, undeliberate and yet to some degree improvisational (in Shustermann 1999: 115-116).

Throughout my observations I noted a great deal of this improvisational habitual behaviour in that people who would check their cellphone as if they were checking their change. In 12 cases during my observations at Nelson Mandela Square businessmen pulled their cellphone out of their suit pockets, checked it and then put it back and continued as though nothing had happened.

In conclusion, in a liminal space we are guided by our own *habitus* in order to alleviate boredom or anxiety or both. Our *habitus* is a part of our identity and our MMT's have thus become part of our identity formation because they form such a great part of us because they are our prostheses. Instead of looking at our relationship with our various MMT's with the "modern" paradigm in mind, i.e. that they are potentially dangerous, an addiction or an unhealthy dependence, it seems more useful to see it as *habitus*, which is in line with the "postmodern" approach.

4.3.3 IDENTITY & SOCIAL INTERACTION

In this section I will be looking at identity and social interaction as two separate entities as well as analysing them together because of the fact that they are linked and inseparable in so many respects.

I look at what Fortunati (in Ling and Pedersen 2005) terms "prostheses" and how these play a role in our identity formation. In this light I look at McLuhan's "extensions of man" theory and the role of Frederic Jameson in this theorising and whether this can be supported by the data that I have collected.

I then question whether or not MMT's are making us homogenous or liberating us by enabling us to express our own sense of individuality, and the extent to how unique we are in such a saturated MMT landscape. I look to Ervin Goffman and how he separated human behaviour into the 'front-stage' and the 'back-stage', and how MMT's are changing the ways in which we behave and how this affects our public life.

Finally I will look at the idea of annoyance which has become a huge part of MMT studies and I will be exploring this idea in terms of public space owing to MMT usage. This usage has been described as addictive or dependent behaviour and I will be looking at this in terms of *habitus* and whether or not our *habitus* has

made us more isolated and whether we are losing our ability to interact in public space.

4.3.3.1 THE HUMAN CYBORG

The notion of 'the human cyborg' has become an important one in New Media, first brought to attention by Haraway (1990) in 'The Cyborg Manifesto'. What has resulted are two strands of thought regarding our relationship to MMT's. There are claims that suggest that we are dependent on technology such as the views expressed by Lemish and Cohen:

For many, the mobile phone has become a true "extension of Man"- to use McLuhan's (1964) expression. The claim for a bodily appropriation of this technology was expressed regularly by men, and only men, claiming it has become a natural extension of themselves: "Once we used to get by without it, it was possible; but now I feel that the instrument is part of me, it is connected to me," argues one interviewee; "... the cellular has become part of my body," declares another. And a third admits, "When I walk without my phone I feel like I am missing a hand."

Many used the terms "addiction", "dependence", "restlessness" without it, as if the absence of their mobile leaves them with a physical as well as a psychological void (in Ling & Pedersen: 2005: 191).

What is interesting to note is the way in which Lemish and Cohen subvert what is positive about McLuhan's view of media technologies as 'extensions of man' into something negative. What this suggests is that they are aligned with the more conventional "modern" view that sees the extent to which we use MMT's in public space as something bad and socially detrimental. Another way in which their views are slightly archaic, especially seeing as this was written in 2005, is the fact that they suggest that technology is the domain for men, 'and only men'. None of the evidence that I have collected suggests that men use technologies more than women.

On the other hand Frederic Jameson who wrote a great deal earlier has a more “postmodern” notion of MMT usage. His intuitive grasp of the movement that technology would take, and indeed has taken, is highly useful for the purposes of my study. When he writes,

the new architecture- like many of the other cultural products I have evoked in the preceding remarks- therefore stands as something like an imperative to grow new organs to expand our senses and our bodies to some new, as yet unimaginable, perhaps ultimately impossible, dimensions (Jameson: 1983, 11).

One can clearly identify the optimism in his tone. His ‘McLuhanesque’ ideas around MMT’s being able to extend the human sensorium negate any common sense notions. Even from the 1980’s perspective from which he is writing one can immediately sense that individuals have started imagining the future relationship between humans and technologies. Although this opinion could be seen as slightly over-optimistic and contain traces of *cyberbole*, when combined with the opinions of the “modernist” strand it helps to contextualise my field of study.

In an article ‘The World at Ears’ Length’ Warren St John looks at a classic case of hyperbole or indeed ‘*cyberbole*’ surrounding iPod usage in public space. And by exaggerating the situation he highlights an important debate about human interaction and identity. He writes:

Idea for a sci-fi horror flick: New York is invaded by zombie-like robots. They ghost along the sidewalks, oblivious of pedestrians, and have frequent near misses with taxis and cyclists, causing chaos. They carry a secret weapon- no bigger than a deck of cards- that can render humans invisible. The only sign that they are not quite human themselves: two white wires that run from their ears into their clothes, just below the neckline, as distinctive as the bolts in the Frankenstein monster’s neck. No need to make the movie, of course. They’re already here: the iPod people. (2004)

St John's exaggeration illustrates an important idea, the fact that certain strands in society abhor the usage of MMT's. The fact that he describes individuals as 'zombie-like robots in a sci-fi horror flick' illustrates the determinist idea that we are unthinking technologically dependent beings.

Through my observations individuals who were engaging with their iPods/mp3 players were generally in an isolated state and very seldom took out their earphones to engage with people. When I observed the women in the gym at the Market Square none of them took out their earphones when they greeted an acquaintance. Again when I questioned the man outside *Exclusive Books* at Liberty Mall I had to flag him down to get his attention and he was reluctant to have a conversation with me. When I asked individuals if they'd ever interrupt an iPod user or someone ensconced in a cellphone conversation all but a few said 'no':

Never! I know if I'm listening to a song and someone looks at me with that "can we chat" face I get seriously annoyed. If my grandad reads a newspaper everyone knows to leave him alone, why should I be any different?

This individual does not distinguish between public space and private space. He sees his isolation in public space as just as important as his grandfather's private space which is quite a self-centered view. What is interesting is the fact that the iPod is nothing new; since the 1980's people have been listening to portable music players, and the Walkman got as much bad press as the newer and sleeker iPod or other mp3 players.

Dylan Jones's homage to the iPod, *iPod Therefore I am* is useful because although it is popular journalism rather than research, it nevertheless helps to contextualize the "postmodern" sensibility. He writes:

The iPod has consumed my life like few things before it. It sits in my office, daring me to play with it, like some sort of sex toy. As well as being the greatest invention since, oh, that round thing that cars tend to have four of,

or those thin slivers of bread that come in packets, the iPod is also obviously a thing a beauty. And I think I'm beginning to fall in love.

Seriously (Jones 2005: 4).

Here Jones is admitting to having been consumed by his iPod, however this is not seen as a bad thing but something inevitable, something that should be celebrated.

Ultimately whether or not one sees the extent of our MMT usage as a positive or negative phenomenon the fact is that the prevalence of MMT's that I have observed in public space means that MMT's are in fact becoming extensions of ourselves. The fact that people choose to carry their cellphones in their hands rather than putting them away or listening to iPods/mp3 players in public means that our 'human sensorium' is being extended. Not only are we displaying our MMT's more overtly but individuals are also expressing a love and appreciation for these devices which makes them so much more than technologies. Ultimately our bodies are changing with the advent of these MMT's that we carry around with us everywhere we go.

4.3.3.2 HOMOGENOUS INDIVIDUALITY

The argument that brands make us homogenous is one that has been contentious for numerous decades. I have purposefully used the oxymoron 'homogenous individuality' in order to explore the two contradictory views concerning brands and what they say about being unique in postmodern society. MMT's are brands and each brand sells a certain lifestyle. Featherstone states that,

the term 'lifestyle' is currently in vogue. While the term has a more restricted sociological meaning in reference to the distinctive style of life of specific status groups, within contemporary consumer culture it connotes individuality, self-expression, and a stylistic self-consciousness. One's body, clothes, speech, leisure pastimes, eating and drinking preferences,

home, car, choice of holidays, etc. are to be regarded as indicators of the individuality of taste and sense of style of the owner/consumer (1991: 83). However 'lifestyle' is in itself branded in that our 'clothes, eating and drinking preferences, car' and so forth are all brands that signify something very specific about us.

Out of all the MMT's that I am discussing the Apple iPod is perhaps the most distinguishable brand. When I asked individuals what MMT they would like to own other than those that they already owned 78% of respondents said that they wanted to own an iPod; all of the individuals were specific about owning an Apple iPod rather than another brand of mp3 player. One individual immediately identified that iPod's are seen as trendier and another said, 'I would like to own an iPod because then I could carry my music around with me and I'd look cool.' However the iPod is not only about being cool and trendy, it also has numerous accessories that other mp3's don't. One male said, 'I travel a lot so I'd like an iPod because I don't like the radio, it irritates me. With the iTrip all your problems are solved'.

Throughout both my preliminary questionnaire and my interviews numerous individuals said that an iPod and other mp3 players are the same because they both play music. However it does not appear that they were being completely honest because of the fact that most of them wanted to own an iPod specifically. In his book Jones describes the ad campaign of the iPod:

Chiat Day's most successful ads for the machine revolved around 'iPodWorld', a place where you and only you could visit: bright, pop-coloured backgrounds, and in the foreground individuals seen only in silhouette (so as not to alienate the consumer- you, them, us!). And curling through the posters were those little tell-tale white headphones, the tiny signifiers of a secret society, that only we, and we alone, knew about. Where were we? We were in our own little worlds, listening to our own private soundtracks in our own particular way. To reinforce the idea that

Apple were selling an idea rather than a product, the ads appeared on fly-posters, bus-sites and billboards as though they were advertising a band. Clever, that (Jones 2005: 61).

What Jones is referring to here is the new type of “hyper-individuality” that is emerging in postmodern culture that allows us to be a member of “iPodWorld”. Through my observations it was very clear who was listening to iPods and who was listening to other mp3 players owing to the tell-tale “white earbuds” that signify the Apple brand. Out of the 11 cases of mp3 player/iPod usage that I identified at Market Square 8 of these were specifically iPods, at Sandton City/Nelson Mandela Square 40 out of the 58 were definitely iPods (owing to distance I was only 100% sure of the 40 iPods that I identified) and finally at Liberty Midlands Mall, 15 out of the 23 cases were iPods. However although over 60 individuals were using iPods there was no specific “type” of iPod user. At Market Square women (of various ages) on the way to gym were using iPods as well as teenagers, at Sandton City/Nelson Mandela Square there was a cross section of individuals including businessmen, young children and teenagers whilst at Liberty Midlands Mall an old man as well as children were using iPods. Although iPods are distinguishable in public space this is only the case because of the signifiers that we associate with the brand.

Ultimately individuals are not simply becoming homogenous because of the fact that we are listening to iPods and have white earphones sticking out of our ears. Although Apple is a brand and the iPod is a uniformed product, Apple seems to be saying that whilst we may be homogenous in the brand we are not and will never be homogenous in our music. Ultimately, as Jones acknowledges, ‘We are in our own little worlds, listening to our own private soundtracks in our own particular way.’

In terms of the cellphone, Katz and Sugiyama note that, ‘the mobile phone thus becomes a device that is not merely a tool but as well a miniature aesthetic

statement about its owner' (Katz & Sugiyama in Ling & Pedersen 2005:64). Along with this they also recognise two different types of cellphone buyers:

First are those who purchase one simply as a communication tool, claiming to care little about its appearance or symbolism... Second are those who buy one in part because of the status that a design, logo or brand imparts (Katz & Sugiyama in Ling & Pedersen 2005: 74).

Again the "modern" and the "postmodern" strands can be identified in this statement in that the "postmodern" individual is probably more likely to use his/her MMT's as a tool to display his/her identity whereas the "modern" individual is focussed on the fact that the cellphone is essentially a communication device.

As an observer it is difficult to observe how people feel about themselves or their own individuality. However by displaying MMT's in public space in the manner that we do it seems logical to assume that every time we use an MMT in public we are consciously saying something about ourselves. In terms of cellphone display it has become quite a subtle act in that we no longer notice the extent to which they are made visible. In coffee shops and restaurants I observed numerous individuals who placed their cellphones on the table rather than concealing them; I also noticed a great deal of individuals who carried them rather than putting them in pockets or handbags. What was most noticeable in coffee shops and restaurants, however, was the fact that individuals, especially teenagers, regard their phones as a point of discussion and often hover around each other's phones comparing cameras, GPS equipment and so forth. Cellphones have also changed in their appearance and particularly female teenagers and young adults are paying attention to dangly cellphone decorations and the colour of their phones. Throughout my observations I noticed that 8 females had either the pink Motorola Razr or the limited edition Dolce & Gabana Motorola Razr.

In my interviews I asked individuals to describe themselves in a couple of words and to discuss their MMT's in terms of how these technologies add to their image. I also asked them about how they felt about the design of their specific MMT's and whether this was important to them. Below are a couple of character sketches.

I am analytical, stubborn and a little quirky. I'm pretty much a professional student. I chose my cellphone because it has this device that you can use to cut out your own covers for your cellphone. It's also a Nokia which is essential cos I hate having to relearn where the different letters and spaces are on other models when I need to sms... My cellphone is unique to me because it's pink and it has a panda on it. I love the camera feature and I store as many photos on my phone as I can and usually have a picture of my boyfriend as my wallpaper.

Here one can see that although functionality is important (it has to be a Nokia) it also has been used as a tool to display something about this individual's identity.

I'm a student who follows his own beat. I chose my cellphone because it looks cool. It's not personalised and everyone has one like it. I use my iPod when and if I exercise. Sometimes I listen to it in lectures.

Here this male has expressed that although his cellphone is cool (and that was the main reason for the purchase) he has not bothered to personalise it. With regards to his iPod he listens to it when he exercises and sometimes as a rebellion when he goes to lectures (he quite literally follows his own beat).

I'm a funky female who is a graphic designer/ animator. I chose my cellphone cos I could afford it and it was a reasonable brand etc. I listen to my iPod whilst I'm working and store photos on my phone, but that's about the only way I could personalise it. Maybe I'll spray paint it, haha.

This female bought her cellphone because she could afford it and it was reliable. The fact that she makes a joke about wanting to spray paint it to personalise it means that she understands what is happening to MMT's and what they say about an individual and despite the fact that she is an artist she shows no real interest in personalising her MMT's.

I'm a young responsible female with a quirky side. I'm an intern at a tv production company. I have my current phone because my other one broke. I chose the first one because it was pink. I haven't personalised my current phone cos I have a grudge against it although it does have a picture of a teddy bear as its wallpaper.

This female indicates that she has a grudge against her new phone because her old one broke which is interesting because she is treating it as though it has human qualities. The fact that she refuses to personalise it indicates how much she dislikes it because it isn't pink and *cool*.

I'm a crazy betty! I bought my cellphone cos it's a gold Dolce & Gabana limited edition Motorola. My first one was stolen so I bought another one. I couldn't have another phone even though I prefer Nokia. When I switch it on there is a voice that says "Dolce and Gabana" and I love it. I buy those ringtones (from the tv and magazines) and at the moment my ringtone is that 'beautiful girls' song, but I'm bored of it so I'll change it.

In this case we have a female who bought her cellphone purely for aesthetic reasons. Even when it was stolen she had to have the same phone because she has formed an attachment to it. She also buys ringtones in order to personalise her phone and make it unique to her.

I'm relatively intelligent I guess and I love gadgets. I have the pink Motorola which is ok, I chose it for the colour but now every girl has one so I want another phone, although it does stop my boyfriend from using it! I always carry my laptop cos I'm obsessed with the Internet and being in touch...my ringtone is 'pinky and the brain', which I love!

In this final example we have a female who bought her phone for aesthetic purposes (because it is pink) but now it is no longer unique so she wants to change it.

From the above examples one can clearly see different levels of attachment to MMT's. There are those who personalise their cellphone cover, use different wallpapers, buy or download different ringtones but on the other hand there are those who do not express the same emotional connection to their MMT's. According to Katz and Sugiyama, 'many mobile phone adopters seek to individualise them, personalize them and integrate them into their own local cultural meaning (in Ling & Pedersen 2005: 74).'

What seems to be happening is that the "modern" strand of thought is arguing that we are becoming homogenous through branding, and as a backlash to this people are striving to make their technologies different and unique. They also care less about the aesthetics of their technologies and more about the functionality of the various MMT's that they own. "Postmodern" individuals, on the other hand, consume MMT's and as a result they become a symbol of our status and our lifestyle. An individual that I interviewed stated that,

People use MMT's as new fashion accessories, let's face it if they were solely about function then we would all still be using the "Nokia Brick". We also wouldn't use them so widely to advertise with, we've become advertisement for every product that we use because we display them so often.

This opinion is typical of the conventional “modern” strand of thought in that he sees humans as the ultimate product placement and the fact that the old “Nokia Brick” was more functional than the more updated cellphones with numerous features. However ironically enough if we weren’t faced with so many choices when it comes to our purchasing of cellphones we would be even more homogenous because we would all be carrying the “Nokia Brick”,

Ultimately the “postmodern” individual has developed feelings and attachments towards his/her various MMT’s and Jones expresses this (albeit by using *cyberbole*):

This is a facility I never really thought about, a facility I never realised I wanted or needed, but now of course can’t live without. At least I don’t think I can. But I feel that way about my iPod generally. The feelings I have towards my iPod (my intuitive little iPod), towards my G4, towards the iPod’s iconic white headphones, towards everything associated with it are almost unnatural (2005: 4).

However despite his apparent *cyberbole* in his description of how he feels towards his iPod he does make some very interesting points about the iPod advertising campaign and how Apple managed to emphasise individuality through the brand, isolation and through music.

The advertising of the product was crucial, and needed to set the machine apart from everything else in the market. Apple’s brief to New York-based ad agency Chiat Day was simple: empower the individual. Unlike every other aspect of the computer world, the iPod had little to do with togetherness, had little to do with community spirit. The iPod was all about individuality and personal space, and its marketing would soon reflect that (Jones 2005: 61).

Initially when I asked individuals if they were aware of iPods, as opposed to other mp3 players in particular, most individuals said that they were not. However when I asked if they could distinguish between iPods and other mp3 players everyone said that they could because of the white headphones. One individual

said, 'sometimes I get bored and play games with myself, like how many iPods I can count. I say to myself, "that's an iPod"...'.

Thus it can be argued that although the Apple iPod is a very specific brand with very specific design features it seems to negate any sense of homogeneity owing to the fact that the brand emphasis is on choice. You can choose your own music, you have the power to construct your own playlists and iTunes is your very own jukebox, or at least that is the message that Apple is trying to convey. It is because of the emphasis on choice and "hyper-individuality" that it is a typically postmodern and almost an "icon" within public space.

What I found very interesting through my research was the number of individuals who are rebelling against cellphones and mp3 players, especially the iPod. In Liberty Midlands Mall I observed an individual walking around with a Sony Walkman. By listening to this "archaic" technology he stood out immediately and I overheard individuals around him commenting on how cool this behaviour was. Ultimately postmodernity offers us so many choices when it comes to brands and MMT's that it is almost impossible to become homogenous.

4.3.3.3 HABITUAL BEHAVIOUR OR MMT DEPENDENCY?

Much has been said about the addictive qualities of MMT's in terms of the modern points of view. Although Jones writes from a postmodernist "technophile" perspective he does pick up an important idea regarding MMT's and this is illustrated when he describes the design of the iPod:

Apple white: 'It's neutral, but it is a bold neutral, just shockingly neutral.' The design, or rather, the shape, was incidental... it just happened that way. 'It could have been shaped like a banana if we'd wanted', says Ive. Instead it looked like a cigarette pack for those addicted to music instead of tobacco. A cigarette pack in cocaine white (Jones 2005: 58).

It cannot be denied that Jones is somewhat over-enthusiastic about the brand but he does make some interesting points through his use of words like 'cigarette' and 'cocaine' which immediately invoke a sense of addiction. Jones' "postmodern" perspective seems to allude to the "modern" view that argues that MMT's are causing anti-social behaviour and that they are addictive and should be used carefully in public space.

There can be no doubt that individuals have relationships with their various MMT's but I believe that the term "addiction" or "dependency" is an exaggeration and a typical "modern" perspective. The trouble with the media landscape at present is the fact that there are too many common sense notions circulating and we are recycling old arguments. When television was introduced there were arguments about it being addictive, anti-social, and so forth. Cellphones and iPods are being accused of exactly the same things except they are mobile so they are even more prevalent, especially within public space.

Through my evidence it can be seen that the prevalence of MMT's in public space is high (especially with regards to cellphones). However this high usage and prevalence of MMT's is often misinterpreted as dependency or addiction. I think that a lot of what we observe in public life regarding MMT usage is habitual behaviour rather than addictive behaviour. Habitual behaviour is not something that we are ruled by, but rather something we have control over. Smoking is an addictive behaviour yet it is just as much habitual as it is addictive. Often individuals smoke, not because they are craving a cigarette, but rather because they are used to the habit. MMT usage is unlike cigarette smoking in that it seems ludicrous that you can be physically addicted to communicating with people and to listening to music.

Ki Park, however, takes the "modernist" strand of the argument and states that these behaviours are mutually exclusive:

To sum up, the reasons people give for using certain media can be reduced to two core factors: ritualistic and instrumental. Instrumental use of media is typically defined by motives for information-seeking or arousal-seeking behaviour, whereas ritualistic use of media is defined by motives such as habit, passing time or companionship...

People who have ritualised motives are habitual media users and have a high affinity with the medium, whereas instrumental users [viewers] use media selectively and have an affinity with specific content... (Ki Park in Ling & Pedersen 2005: 258).

Ki Park says that habitual/ritualistic media users have a high affinity with the medium and this can be seen in my evidence especially when it comes to how individuals feel about their specific MMT's. However Ki Park goes on to say that 'habitual/ritualistic use of media implies dependency or addiction'. I would argue that this is not the case because as Bouveresse states:

Habitus is the thing that explains how 'types of behaviour can be directed towards certain ends without being consciously directed to these ends, or determined by them.' 'The habitus', he (Bourdieu) notes elsewhere, 'entertains with the social world that has produced a real ontological complicity, the source of cognition without consciousness, intentionality without intention, and practical mastery of the world's regularities which allows one to anticipate the future, without even needing to posit it as such' (in Shusterman 1999: 53).

Thus although we are guided by our *habitus* we are not necessarily determined by it and therefore assuming that we are addicted to MMT's is not an inevitable conclusion.

4.3.3.4 FRONT-STAGE AND BACK-STAGE PERSONAS

Erving Goffman's 'back-stage', 'front-stage' persona (1956) analogy is very useful for the purposes of theorizing "modern" and "postmodern" identity. In my literature review I have explored Goffman at some length however for the

purposes of this section I have included a quote from Julsrud who gives a succinct synopsis of the 'front-stage back-stage' analogy:

The connection between space and behaviour is in sociology most elaborated by the so-called "symbolic interactionists", and in particular by Ervin Goffman (1956, 1961, 1971)... Following Goffman, the frame of action for human behaviour is the social setting, where people can play out their different *roles*. The analogy of a "stage" is used to describe the place where individuals have the chance to put into action their own character. Underlying the dramaturgical metaphor is the more general point that the self should be recognized as a social product. The self of an individual is what comes to life on the stage in different social interactions (in Ling and Pedersen 2005:98).

The 'back-stage' persona is the identity that we adopt when we are out of the public eye and the 'front-stage' persona is the identity that we adopt when we are in the public eye. Although the idea is modern in terms of the fact that it allows for multiple identities the fact is that the modern individual has a 'core' identity, an essence as it were. In the current media landscape it has also been appropriated by postmodernists in that it acknowledges that we can have multiple personalities to draw from throughout our everyday lives and that our 'front-stage' and 'back-stage' personas are blurred. Steve Woolgar (in Ling and Pedersen 2005) illustrates that 'front' and 'back-stage' are not as simple as previously described by the "modern" strands. It is not simply a case of 'front-stage' (other personalities) and 'back-stage' (real personality) owing to the fact that we are in perpetual contact because of our various MMT's. Our 'front-stage' and 'back-stage' personas are becoming a great deal more complex. An example of this complexity between the two stages is the fact that we can have a face-to-face conversation with someone whilst smsing another person who is not present. The 'front-stage' behaviour is the face-to-face contact whilst the 'back-stage' behaviour is the contact that we have with someone who is not physically present. However owing to the fact that we are in the public eye whilst performing

a 'back-stage' act means that distinguishing between the two "stages" is greatly complicated.

Woolgar and other theorists such as Fortunati realize that the world in which we live is changing because of the MMT's that we use:

With the intervention of the mobile phone into in the public space (Katz & Aakhus, 2002) we are experiencing a change in the tendency to downplay the front stage in favour of the back stage...In this context, the convenience offered by the mobile becomes irresistible. It also is being played out in the parts of our private life that are being paraded across life's front stage (Fortunati in Ling and Pedersen 2005: 205).

What was previously private behaviour (for example communicating with someone who is not physically present) is now a public act and for this reason I believe individuals with a "modern" sensibility are likely to be annoyed by MMT use in public places because they believe that these acts should remain private.

In terms of my data I will analyse how 'back-stage' and 'front-stage' behaviour and private and public space have become complicated and resulted in certain individuals being annoyed in public space.

4.3.3.5 ANNOYANCE

Annoyance with regards to MMT's comes in three forms. Firstly there is the annoyance that individuals feel when they cannot get hold of another individual when they expect them to be permanently available. According to the "modern" view of Ki Park this is related to "addictive" behaviour:

If the mobile phone is unavailable for a time, people become highly anxious and irritated by the absence of the mobile phone. These kinds of behaviours can go on despite the fact that these are troubling signs of addiction (in Ling and Pedersen 2005: 267).

Numerous individuals that I interviewed expressed annoyance at the fact that they are expected to answer their cellphone on demand. They also indicated that they found it quite stressful to be in perpetual contact and in some ways this illustrates the “modern” mindset because the “postmodern” individual celebrates being in perpetual contact. One woman said, ‘I always ignore it! I’m not a slave to my cellphone and my kids always complain that I never answer my phone, but truthfully I just can’t be bothered with it!’ whilst another complained, ‘I get really annoyed with those voice messages shouting at me saying ‘why aren’t you answering your phone dammit!’ Like they can’t understand why sometimes I just want to be alone!’

Secondly there is the annoyance that individuals experience when others use their MMT’s in what they deem “inappropriate” situations. Through my observations I witnessed a lot of annoyance regarding the usage of cellphones and iPods in certain areas. At Market Square I witnessed cases of annoyance regarding iPods on three occasions. In the gym a woman was singing along with her iPod and a couple of individuals rolled their eyes or shook their heads in dismay. Another case of annoyance was identified when an individual had her iPod “too loud” and one woman told her that she had read in a magazine that listening to your iPod too loudly causes deafness. At Sandton City and Nelson Mandela Square I observed more instances of annoyance in restaurants rather than coffee shops. However at the *Mugg and Bean* I did note one case where a man was talking exceptionally loudly on his phone and this caused numerous angry looks and mutterings of, ‘he’s so rude’. From *Baglios* restaurant I identified over 20 cases of annoyance; one was concerning the waiter who was on his cellphone. Finally at Liberty Midlands Mall there were instances of annoyance in *Exclusive Books*, *Mugg and Bean* and in the cinema.

The graphs (see Figures 4.2.5, 4.2.6 & 4.2.7) illustrate the places that individuals thought to be most inappropriate to use MMT’s and also how many people felt annoyed at this usage. Although these were only preliminary results they were

very accurate in terms of what I observed at all three shopping malls and also what I found when I asked individuals during my interviews.

Through my interviews and observations I noticed that most people found cellphone usage in the cinema the most annoying which was followed by restaurants and bookstores. Most people who commented said that people have forgotten etiquette and are generally selfish when it comes to their own usage:

If someone answers or uses their cellphone in the movies I want to smash it into a million pieces!

Surprisingly I get most annoyed in bookstores, for me bookstores are like libraries, they're the place you go for seclusion and quiet. Books are symbols of what is most special about the pre-technological era, when cellphones ring I want to yell, ssshhhhh!

What is interesting about cellphone and other MMT usage in bookstores is the fact that people with "modern" and conventional values treat bookstores like libraries whereas a more "postmodern" sensibility treats bookstores like shops where you buy commodities, not peace and quiet.

My dad always answers his phone in restaurants and I want to die, I can't handle it and what's worse is / get the brunt of the annoyed looks!

As with my preliminary questionnaires what was interesting is how many people complained about such behaviour and yet use their MMT's in exactly the same way in exactly the same situations. In about 15 out of 35 cases respondents said things like 'I would never use my cellphone in a cinema *unless...*' or 'I don't *but...*' Again, as with the results of my preliminary survey, some individuals do not feel annoyed at all and don't understand what everyone else is complaining about in terms of MMT usage and annoyance.

I don't feel much because it happens all the time, it's not like they're picking their nose or anything!

The phone rings, you answer it. What's the problem? More annoying is when they let it ring!

Thirdly, there is the aspect that I will focus more heavily on, the annoyance and the anxiety experienced when we are isolated from an activity and we are forced to observe rather than to participate.

When I asked individuals how they feel when someone listens to their iPod/mp3 player in public there were two strands of thought. One individual expressed concern for shop assistants and the fact that iPods/mp3 players should only be used whilst engaged in a singular activity, 'It's rude. Shop assistants (if they're doing their job properly) would normally ask if you require assistance. With earphones on that makes their job difficult. Besides, I like the interaction with people, so music should either be shared, or if made personal then when doing a singular activity like running, gyming etc.' However there were also more judgemental responses such as, 'I think they need to find some friends, it's so antisocial!' and 'I think they look weird with earphones and especially those stupid looking arm bands!'

In these responses it's interesting to note how annoyed people get when others look different or behave differently. There are those who are annoyed simply because they think it is rude behaviour and they became quite moralistic in their judgement of such people, there are those who deem it anti-social even if the person listening to the iPod/mp3 player is a complete stranger, there are people who are annoyed just because of how others look and finally there are people who are annoyed by the noise disturbance that they cannot hear properly.

However not everyone finds iPod/mp3 usage in public space annoying and these more “postmodern” individuals expressed thoughts like, ‘I totally empathise! Life is much more peachy with a soundtrack!’, ‘I don’t really take much notice, especially if it’s a stranger’ and ‘I look out for the tell-tale white earphones and think, that’s an iPod. But other than that I don’t really care.’

What is interesting is that with all MMT usage there is always ambivalence that is associated with annoyance. So many people criticise MMT use and are annoyed at certain behaviours yet do exactly what they abhor. When I asked individuals how they feel when they use their iPod/mp3 in public the responses were very interesting and again there were two very distinct camps on the subject.

There are individuals who feel self-conscious and one individual said, ‘I never use it in public, it makes me feel uncomfortable and I feel that people are watching me’. However there are also individuals who morally attack individuals who use MMT’s in public and express thoughts like, ‘I use it often although I find it irritating when other people do the same thing. I guess I just know when it’s appropriate to use it and when it’s not’.

This type of annoyance is also prevalent with regards to cellphone use, particularly when the person you are with answers their cellphone and you are forced to listen in to their conversation from a distance. During my observations I found that the majority of cellphone annoyance was when individuals were talking very loudly on their cellphones. During the 60 hours that I spent conducting observations I noted over 50 cases where individuals were annoyed at loud and obtrusive conversation. Katz describes this as ‘unreciprocated conversation’ and says:

A further violation is that these others are engaged in acts of unreciprocated communication. As such, we are physiologically prepared to engage with them, yet they are engaged elsewhere. The problem of unreciprocated communication is one that seems highly problematical as it

relates to mobile phone use. It has often been noted that we generally do not object to two people having a conversation in the seat behind us on a train. Yet we find it distracting when a person is talking on the mobile, that is, when there is not a conversational partner so that we can also hear the other half of the conversation (2003: 27).

The trouble with communication is that it has to be reciprocal in order for it to be effective. When someone is available for conversation yet cannot participate this leads to anxiety, boredom and ultimately annoyance. I observed a number of instances ('the wait') whereby people were left sitting alone whilst they were waiting for their partner to end his/her cellphone conversation. These individuals were clearly bored because they reverted to habitual behaviour like playing with sugar sachets and fiddling with their own cellphone. After some time they expressed annoyance by scowling, yawning or sighing and in some cases they began their own cellphone conversation.

When I interviewed individuals about how they feel when the person they're with answers their cellphone the majority of people were highly annoyed:

If I'm chatting to a friend and they answer it, it drives me mad!

I have one friend in particular who always answers her phone and she'll yak for hours. I just have to sit there and play with sugar packets or otherwise I'll sms my other friends to tell them how annoyed I am!

Again when I asked if they had ever stopped a real life conversation in order to answer their cellphone most people said 'yes' without any qualms although most of them admitted to being highly annoyed when other people do the same thing.

Yes, but the call must be more important than the current conversation. I think discretion is important and you should always ask if it's ok.

Sometimes I reject the call and carry on with the conversation with the person I'm with, but it depends on the person I'm with. Friends usually understand but parents just don't get it, although my dad always answers his phone even though he says it's rude and frowns upon the behaviour.

Most of these individuals said that when this situation arises they feel popular, great, happy and so forth with very few individuals saying that they feel self-conscious owing to the annoyed looks that they are likely to receive.

According to Katz we may be strongly conditioned (hardwired) by our culture to feel irritated by phone use in what we think of as *our* public space. In line with this numerous respondents were extremely annoyed at the lack of choice that they had in terms of being an eavesdropper to a conversation of a complete stranger. Previously we have always thought of eavesdropping as a voluntary behaviour but many individuals indicated the lack of choice that they have when it comes to listening to the conversations of others owing to the volume and the fact that it is in a public space. Fortunati identifies what happens when an individual is placed in a situation where he/she is outside of the field of conversation:

In its basic elements, mobile communication is characterized by a first interlocutor, who is in one place, and a second interlocutor, who is absent from that place, but who shares the contents of the dialogue, and by people present who are not the addressees, and who therefore play an ambiguous role as being extraneous to the relational context; they are, that is, involuntary listeners, or veritable eavesdroppers (in Ling & Pedersen 2005: 214).

Through my interviews eavesdropping was a prevalent theme and the majority of respondents are annoyed when they have to listen to other people's conversations, especially if they are supposed to be private or contain "sensitive material". Some individuals expressed a slight amount of guilt and said things like, 'I feel like an eavesdropper, it's so hard not to listen when someone starts a

very private conversation in public' whilst others blocked it out using other MMT's, 'That's why I love my iPod, I never have to listen to those annoying cellphone conversations'. However some people expressed being selective about their eavesdropping, 'It depends, if it's a guy wearing a bomb squad vest talking about whether he should cut the red wire or a pretty girl discussing the public venue for a party then I'd be interested and eavesdrop, but most of the time it's a granny arguing over the bread price so I just block it out!' and 'I listen in until I get bored or irritated. I don't really need to know the mundane details of a stranger's life and I get annoyed that they're subjecting the world to it.' On the other hand there were those who were distressed at the content, 'As a mother I get annoyed because often there's a lot of swearing and foul language, especially amongst teenagers'.

Postmodern society is one that centers around a new form of "hyper-individuality" where individuals care less about how they look despite the fact that moral attacks on the usage of MMT's are so prevalent. Rey Chow writes specifically about the Walkman, but much of what is said about the Walkman can be applied to the mp3 player or iPod as well as other MMT's that we are using in public space:

The autism of the Walkman listener irritates onlookers precisely because the onlookers find themselves reduced to the activity of looking alone. For once, voyeurism yields no secrets: one can look all one wants and still nothing is to be seen. The sight of the Walkman listener, much like the sight of some of our most brilliant scientists, artists and theorists, is one that we cannot enter even with the most piercing of glances. (The Walkman allows us for the first time to realize that our 'geniuses' have always lived with earphones on.) Critics of the Walkman, like critics of mass culture in general, are condemned to a position of exteriority, from which all kinds of ineffectual moralistic attacks are fired. This position of exteriority amounts to the charge: 'Look at yourself! Look how stupid you look!' But the autistic sight is one which is free of all responsibility to look,

observe, and judge. Its existence does not depend on looking, especially not on looking at oneself. (in During 1999: 475-476)

Chow's use of the word 'autism' in order to describe the Walkman is interesting because it suggests a type of behaviour that excludes the presence of others. The fact that the user of such a device is so secluded in his/her listening, means that anyone observing him/her is immediately excluded. As a result the tendency is to judge the behaviour as antisocial or ridiculous by the more "modern" members of society whereas individuals with a more "postmodern" outlook are likely to accept this behaviour. Although this quote is highly speculative it does indicate a move from normative "conformitive" culture to a culture where there is no longer the pressure to conform and extreme individuality can be expressed. Ultimately we have moved from one cultural regime to another and this can be seen throughout my data in terms of the prevalence of MMT's and the usage of such MMT's in the various areas of the shopping mall despite whether or not they are deemed acceptable in such situations. Throughout my observations and interviews I also noticed the presence of "hyper-individuality": individuals were listening to their iPods and had personalized their cellphones in numerous ways.

4.3.3.6 "ISOLATION", THE FUTURE OF FACE-TO-FACE COMMUNICATION?

Much of the concern surrounding our usage of MMT's is the fact that we are becoming anti-social, isolated and that our ability to communicate is breaking down.

During my observations I observed quite a lot of iPod and mp3 usage and most of this usage was whilst moving from one place to another or whilst waiting for something or someone. One could argue that these are examples of liminality but as I explained earlier it is more difficult to identify specific cases of liminality with regards to iPod/mp3 player usage.

Ultimately iPod and mp3 player usage is associated with isolated behaviour and this type of behaviour is not new. Humans have always isolated themselves from public space; be it by reading books or newspapers on trains, coffee shops, doctor's waiting rooms and so forth. MMT's can be used as tools to isolate oneself from the environment and the fact is they change public space into non-spaces, hyperspace, cyberspace and so forth. These spaces are typically spaces for the individual in that they are isolated spaces but they are not that different from the imaginary spaces offered to us by books.

When I interviewed individuals about how they feel when they engage with a particular MMT and whether or not they feel isolated most individuals said that they did not feel isolated.

I am isolated, but I'm isolated by choice, if I want to interact with someone I will... obviously.

No, not isolated because you're still interacting with the technology.

No, cellphones are for connecting with people, and if you're with people you're not isolated.

Isolated has a negative connotation, I feel isolated in a good way!

For those individuals who did respond that they felt isolated (be it in a good or bad way) I asked them how it made them feel and most of them said that they felt liberated.

Sometimes it can be refreshing, it's a break from life!

I like feeling like I'm in my own world by listening to my iPod. It helps me to distance myself from the frustrations of daily life.

Sometimes I just want to be by myself, and personally I don't think that's weird at all. The thing with communications nowadays is that people expect you to be available all the time and everyone is placing so much emphasis on antisocial behaviour and so forth. In the old days no one complained if you wanted to be by yourself, now everyone is on my case!

When I asked individuals how they felt about using their iPods/mp3's in public most individuals felt comfortable (otherwise one has to question why they would be using them in such a situation), 'If I'm walking between shops it provides a pleasant escape, if I'm about to engage in a difficult task it may inspire me, or focus me during exercise. I guess it makes me completely oblivious to the environment that I'm in'. Whilst some felt self-conscious but continued to use them regardless, 'I feel self-conscious and isolated'.

In his article 'The World at Ears Length', St John discusses this isolation that causes individuals to go into a kind of 'iCocoon', but instead of seeing iPod/mp3 player usage as isolated it may be more accurate to view it as multi-tasking. Ultimately MMT users are present in public space but to an extent they are also absent because they are engaged in back-stage activities.

The renowned media and cultural studies theorist Mark Poster expresses a different sentiment towards the iPod and other mp3's:

"I don't see it as a private cocoon," said Mark Poster, a professor of film and media studies at the University of California, Irvine, who has studied the social impact of cellphones. "I see it as connecting with a musician and therefore making a connection that's not related to physical space. We need to understand it, instead of saying, 'It's not how we used to be, so it's bad' " (St John: 2004).

This notion is also supported by Dylan Jones who states that one cannot be isolated from communication when engaging with your iPod despite the fact that he is a self-confessed iPod enthusiast and is likely to be somewhat biased.

With regards to isolation when engaged with one's cellphone, I asked when individuals were most likely to engage with their cellphones. Most individuals said that they always have their cellphone with them and would engage with it whenever it beeped, rang, buzzed, vibrated etc. Most individuals also agreed that the cellphone does not isolate, but rather it connects. In terms of my observations I recorded quite a few instances of isolated cellphone conversations, people using their phones in the public toilets, hiding in a corner or whispering from behind a changeroom curtain. What this demonstrates is the fact that some individuals are aware that their conversation at that particular time may be inappropriate and they have compensated for this. However generally speaking most individuals appear to be comfortable with their own MMT usage and continue to behave in the manner that is so prevalent in public space, an MMT "free-for-all".

Finally when I asked how individuals have come to feel about face-to-face communication as opposed to interaction via MMTs most people said face-to-face is more important although judging from people's responses towards their own MMT usage there is a slight discrepancy because numerous individuals I observed stopped face-to-face communication in order to engage with his/her MMT. The responses below are interesting because they are slightly at odds with people's behaviour in public space because most people tend to stop face-to-face communication if they are interrupted by their MMT's.

Face-to-face is far more rewarding, stimulating and challenging. Nothing beats a good old chat, all of your senses are engaged and the tone is much clearer, there is far less ambiguity.

Face-to-face is great but it does help to have email and the phone. It also means that if someone asks me something I can delay the response and avoid looking like an idiot “umming and aahing” when a client asks me something face-to-face!

I love talking face-to-face with mates but if I don't know the person or if I've just met someone I much prefer technology, especially smsing!

I think technology has made us lazy, I remember when guys used to phone girls they were interested in and although the conversations were ALWAYS awkward it's part of growing up and learning about interaction. Now its so easy, you just punch out flirtatious suggestions with your thumbs and press send. The chase has gone and that's really sad.

I believe that although our MMT's do make us isolated from face-to-face communication for the time that we are engaging with the particular technology, it is not making us more anti-social. Most people that I interviewed only listen to their mp3s/iPods if they are alone, be it shopping alone or travelling alone. No one that I interviewed said that they would ever listen to their iPod/mp3 if they were shopping with a friend; and no one that I observed exhibited this behaviour. In terms of cellphones most people agree that they are a social tool and although they admit that they infringe on “real” conversation they do not see it as a threat to face-to-face communication. According to Katz:

As to the first of these processes- the pleasure of our communication activities- it seems very much the case that we are hardwired to seek social contact (2003: 25).

As humans I do not believe that we deliberately choose to be anti-social, rather I believe we seek refuge from our perpetual contact that is often exhausting to maintain. When we are alone and a stranger in public space it is human nature to retreat into a safe environment that is provided by a newspaper, book or MMT.

It cannot be denied that our public and private spaces (our 'front-stage' and our 'back-stage') are changing radically because of our communications options, but this is not a new phenomenon, rather it is a continuation of the media landscape that has been emerging over the last couple of decades:

Electronic information seeps through walls and leaps across vast distances. While we often think of electronic media as simply connecting one place to another more quickly, our forms of communication have been subtly but significantly altering the environments we live in, transforming them into new social places in which we are becoming new kinds of people (Meyerowitz 2003: 97).

Instead of looking at our use of MMT's as addictive behaviour that is causing us to be homogenous it is more progressive to look at this usage as a new regime where we can express ourselves through our MMT's and communicate in new and different ways. Ultimately there are ambivalences in our MMT usage, the fact that we can abhor using MMT's in certain spaces but use our own MMT's in exactly these spaces that we abhor. As Meyerowitz is saying in the above quote and what Auge was saying almost ten years earlier, 'we have to relearn how we think about space' (1995) because this is going to effect how we behave in space and how we use our various technologies within this space.

5. CONCLUSION

My research shows that there is enough prevalence to suggest that MMT's, especially cellphones, are being used in shopping malls. In terms of laptops and mp3 players/iPods, although they are being used to a lesser extent to those of cellphones, the fact is that they *are* being used in public space. It is my belief that even though they have yet to become appropriated in the way in which the cellphone has, their prevalence in public space will increase. The fact that they are relatively new technologies in this country means that they have not been fully appropriated by individuals in public space, although it is doubtful that their use will supersede that of the cellphone.

Through my research it can be seen that both MMT users and researchers not only have to 'relearn how to think about space' (Auge: 1995), but we also have to relearn how to think about individuals and our interaction and behaviour within this space. Throughout my research project I have tried to highlight the juxtapositions between "modernity" and "postmodernity", and draw attention to the tensions between these two strands of thought in terms of people's attitudes towards the public space of the shopping mall, MMT usage in this space, identity display and social interaction. However I have also noted that the fact that modernity and postmodernity are 'running on a continuum' means that there is an obvious conflict between these two paradigms and therefore individuals may express both "modern" and "postmodern" views simultaneously.

The "modern" mindset is such because "modern" public space has always been clearly defined with certain rules about how individuals should behave within that space. However "postmodern" space is such that it encompasses so many different spaces and encourages "hyper-individuality" to such an extent that the environment becomes a type of "MMT free-for-all" as it were. Through my data I have given evidence of both the "modern" and the "postmodern" views on MMT usage in public but argued that although these two exist separately they are

shrouded in ambivalence owing to the fact that people say one thing and do another. Throughout my Literature Review and Data Analysis my aim has been to explore these ambivalences in a manner that gives insight into my field of study by acknowledging that they exist in people's attitudes and views towards MMT's and public space. Numerous individuals indicated that they disagree with MMT usage in certain places but then admitted to using MMT's in exactly the same situation, however they did attempt to validate their own behaviour by using words like 'emergency' and 'urgent'. Theorists such as Cumiskey (2005) have validated my findings by making these ambivalences associated with the two paradigms clear, in that we have a 'dual allegiance' to the MMT's that we engage with in our everyday lives.

I have pointed out that the shopping mall is a complex postmodern space because it embodies so many "other" spaces. My research has shown that the various theoretical spaces that I have discussed in my Literature Review are prevalent in postmodern space and that they are affecting how individuals behave in public space. I have explored Katz's ideas on 'liminality' (2003) and extended them to ideas of "the wait" and "the journey" and my research shows that these are prevalent liminal states within public space. During any form of 'liminality' there is enough evidence to suggest that MMT's are being used in numerous ways, either as a way in which to alleviate anxiety or in order to combat boredom.

I have observed and found through my interviews that MMT's help individuals, who tend to be bored or anxious in the environment, to feel more comfortable. This can be seen through my analysis of how individuals use their MMT's and how they feel towards MMT's in these specific circumstances. The fact that individuals can move through the space of the shopping mall without company and still manage to feel at ease can be attributed, in some way, to the MMT's that we use. However in some ways we are also using MMT's habitually and are often unaware that we are using them. Throughout my observations I noted numerous

individuals checking their cellphones as if they were checking their change in their pockets or fiddling with them in a manner that indicated that they were not using them to communicate but rather as something to fiddle with.

In terms of our private and public space I have shown that MMT's have complicated our perception of these spaces. Using Goffman's 'front-stage, back-stage' analogy (1956) I have attempted to explore the fact that the boundaries between our public and private self as well as our public and private lives have become somewhat blurred. This blurring has resulted from our high use of MMT's in public space making our private actions very much more public. Thus the distinction between what is a private act and what is a public act has become much less clearly defined. What this has resulted in are certain individuals, who have a very clear idea of what public space *should* be like, feeling annoyed at the usage of MMT's in public space. I have given evidence of instances of annoyance that I observed as well as from individuals whom I interviewed.

Although the shopping mall is a postmodern space, this does not mean that everyone who frequents them is necessarily "postmodern"; as a result there are people who are annoyed at MMT usage within this space. On the other hand individuals who have a "postmodern" frame of mind are quite comfortable within the space and use their MMT's whenever they feel the need to do so. However as I have previously explained, the fact that modernity and postmodernity have not yet split from each other means that there are also individuals who share elements of the "modern" and the "postmodern" and therefore ambivalences result.

I have pointed out that the "modern" view is one which argues that the use of MMT's in such circumstances indicates "addiction" or "dependence" on the medium. On the other hand I have suggested that it is more likely that instead of notions of "addiction" it is more probable that we are acting in terms of our *habitus*. Thus we are not determined by the MMT's that we use but rather we

determine how we use our various MMT's in public space. Hence despite the fact that we use MMT's very heavily in liminal space this is in no way addictive behaviour.

In terms of the debate surrounding technological determinism, I have suggested, through my research and data, that the terms cannot be supported owing to the fact that we have a 'repertoire of practices' (Haddon: 2005) when it comes to how we use MMT's. The fact that we use technologies in counter intuitive ways also means that it is very unlikely that we are determined by MMT's; rather we determine how we use them. I have suggested that McLuhan's notion of MMT's as 'extensions of the human sensorium' should be viewed with the "postmodern" paradigm in mind. Thus rather than seeing MMT's as extensions of ourselves in that they *determine* us, I have argued that we should see McLuhan's argument in such a way that we *determine* how we put these MMT's to use. Hence we are given the choice to extend our senses and use MMT's in the way that best suit our own needs.

These choices and options become important in terms of the homogeny versus individuality debate. The "modern" strand argues that MMT's are making us homogenous whilst the "postmodern" strand argues that MMT's are encouraging a new type of "hyper-individuality" owing to the number of choices that we have available to us. In terms of the iPod, and in fact all mp3 players, the realism is that although they all look the same, and we may all look the same when we listen to them, the fact is that we are all likely to be listening to completely different material, be it music or the spoken word. As users we can compile our own soundtracks and choose what music we listen to and this means that although we may look like a homogenous mass of "iPeople", we are actually overtly expressing our individuality. In terms of cellphones it is important to consider the fact that we have so many choices available to us in terms of cellphone brand and design; we can personalize our phones, to a certain extent,

and this means that although most of us have cellphones this does not imply that we are all the same by default.

It cannot be denied that as humans we display our MMT's in order to express something about ourselves. This can be seen in my data in terms of how many individuals customize their phone and note the importance of design and to a certain degree, colour. The fact that the prevalence of MMT's at all three shopping malls was so high means that we are not purposefully concealing them, nor are we discreetly using them, but overtly displaying them.

In terms of isolation and whether or not we are becoming antisocial, as claimed by numerous theorists, through my observations I have discovered that this cannot be substantiated. In general MMT usage in the public space of the shopping mall is high and there are numerous instances of singular behaviour, as is the case of laptop and iPod/mp3 player usage. However I do not believe that this is attributed to our being antisocial because prior to the advent of MMT's we would not naturally seek out the company of strangers in large public areas. When individuals were waiting for individuals to arrive and they were using iPods/mp3 players all of them removed their earphones when their "partner" arrived. My evidence supports the fact that individuals only use iPods if they are waiting for someone or if they are bored. However, this would have to be explored with further research.

When I asked people about whether or not cellphones made one feel isolated the majority of people said 'no'. They all had arguments about how cellphones were about being connected not about being isolated. In fact most of them agreed that they were communicating with people and therefore could not be blamed for being "anti-social". In the case of cellphone usage and anti-social behaviour, the blurring between private and public space is very apparent.

Ultimately through this research it can be seen that our media landscape is broadening and that our public spaces are becoming much more complex owing to the prevalence of MMT's and our relationship with them. What is most interesting is the fact that the modernist perspective has not been fully abandoned even in an analysis of a postmodern space.

As a researcher, the possibility for further research is vast, both in terms of MMT's and the space in which they have become a part. Fortunati states that:

Society is today one great experimental laboratory, where the capacity of postmodernity to metabolise the dissonances of the image, and unexpectedly reveal certain stereotypes, is being re-confirmed. It is true that by broadening communication life is being restricted, but at the same time it is becoming richer, because we are discovering the intimacy of many people. Certainly, life is still a theater, but the difference between when we are acting and when we are being ourselves is on the whole less distinct, if only because the mobile gives us the possibility, when necessary, to "stage" ourselves. Finally, even when we are alone, we are not alone completely any longer (in Ling & Pedersen 2005:217).

Fortunati succinctly identifies the fact that whilst our lives are being restricted by communication to a certain extent we are also able to have more of a social life because we are able to communicate in so many ways and this sums up the ambivalences that exist in postmodern society today. However ultimately his final point is perhaps the most poignant in that MMT's have made it impossible for us to be alone because even when we are listening to our iPod's/mp3 players there is someone singing or talking to us.

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APPENDIX ONE

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONNAIRE

(QUESTIONS ON DEMOGRAPHICS)

1.1 Sex? ____MALE____

1.2 Age? _____55_____

1.3 What is your income per month?

- Less than R2500.00
- Between R2500.00 and R5000.00
- Between R5000.00 and R7500.00
- Between R7500.00 and R10000.00
- Between R10000.00 R15000.00
- More than R15000.00

2. Do you have... (tick where applicable)

- an iPod or other mp3 device (please specify)?
- a laptop? Do you use wireless internet? Yes No
- a cellphone?

(QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE PUBLIC SPACE OF THE SHOPPING MALL)

3. How often do you frequent shopping malls?

- More than twice a week
- Twice a week
- Once a week
- Once every fortnight
- Once a month

4. Do you enjoy going to shopping malls?

Yes

No

5. Do you ever go to the mall alone?

Yes No

6. Would you ever go to a shopping mall without your cellphone?

Yes No

7. Have you ever used an internet hotspot at a shopping mall?

Yes No

8. Do you ever listen to an mp3 player/iPod whilst shopping?

Yes No

9. What are the main reasons for going to shopping malls? (rate in order of the most likely)

- Clothes/shoe shopping
- Gadget/music/dvd/entertainment shopping
- Grocery/household shopping
- To eat
- Boredom/To hang out with friends/being a “mallrat”
- To watch a film
- Other (please specify if applicable)

(QUESTIONS AROUND ATTITUDES TO THE USE OF MMT’S)

10. In order of inappropriateness rate where you think the use of such technologies is most unacceptable.

- coffee shops
- restaurants
- cinemas
- bookstores
- grocery stores
- music stores
- clothing stores
- religious bookstores
- Other (please specify if applicable)

11. Have you ever answered an sms or phonecall in the following situations? (tick where applicable)

- In the cinema
- In a restaurant
- In a coffee shop
- In a bookstore

12. Do you get annoyed when people use technology in the above situations?

Yes

No

(QUESTIONS AROUND DISPLAY AND BEHAVIOUR)

13. If you are waiting for someone and they are late do you... (tick the most likely)

- Phone them
- Wander around the mall until they phone you
- Wait in the place where you agreed to meet
- Go to an internet hotspot/internet café to catch up on emails

14. If you go to a restaurant or coffee shop and your partner gets up for a particular reason and leaves you waiting do you... (tick the most applicable)

- Get out your cellphone
- Sit and wait
- Fiddle with something on the table
- Other (please specify)

15. What features are most important on a cellphone (rate in order of importance)

- Colour
- Design
- Camera
- Memory
- Extra features (like Bluetooth, mp3 player etc.
- Brand

16. Do you think there is any difference between the iPod and other mp3 players?

Yes

No

17. If yes what?

18. Why did you choose your particular laptop? (rate in order of necessity)

- Price
- Brand
- Features (Bluetooth, internal modem, etc.)
- Memory/storage
- Design
- Other (please specify)

APPENDIX TWO

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Important Note: The following questions were used in non-structured and *Facebook* interviews with mall goers. The data sought is qualitative, not quantitative.

1. Informed Consent

(In order to gain informed consent from my interviewees I will briefly explain the nature and purpose of my research, assure them that the information I obtain will remain anonymous, and give them an information sheet explaining the research and their participation in it.)

1. Are you willing to answer some questions on mobile media technologies (hereafter MMT's) and shopping malls?
2. Will you sign this statement agreeing to participate in the research?

2. Questions relating to MMT's

1. What MMT's do you own?
2. What MMT's would you like to own? Why?
3. If you have/had an mp3 player where would you or do you use it?
4. Would you ever listen to an mp3 player whilst shopping?
5. Which MMT's do you take to the mall?
6. Why do you take MMT's to shopping malls?
7. What are the most important features with regards to your cellphone/laptop/mp3 player?

3. Questions relating to public space.

1. When I am in a shopping mall I feel? (insert a word that best describes how you feel and try to elaborate)
2. Would you rather go to a shopping mall alone or with company? Why?
3. If you frequent a shopping mall alone are you likely to spend more time there?
4. Have you noticed any changes in the shopping mall over the last couple of years in terms of MMT's?
5. How often do you frequent shopping malls?
6. Why do you frequent shopping malls?

4. Questions relating to social interaction

1. When someone answers their cellphone in public how do you feel?
2. When someone listens to their mp3 player in public how do you feel?
3. When you answer your cellphone in public how do you feel?

4. When/if you use your mp3 player in public how do you feel?
5. Have you ever stopped a real life conversation in order to answer your cellphone?
6. Do you feel isolated when you are engaging with a particular MMT?
7. If you do feel isolated how does this make you feel?
8. When are you most likely to engage with a particular MMT?
9. How do you feel when someone has a cellphone conversation in public?
10. How do you feel about face-to-face communication as opposed to interaction via MMT's?

5. Questions relating to identity

1. How would you define yourself as an individual?
 2. What is your profession?
 3. What made you choose your particular cellphone?
 4. When do you carry your laptop with you and what do you use it for?
 5. If you have an mp3 player when are you most likely to use it?
- Are you aware of the design differences between the iPod and other mp3 players?
7. What makes your cellphone unique to you?
 8. Do you store photos on your phone and do you ever use them as your wallpaper?

APPENDIX THREE

CONSENT LETTER



School of Literary Studies, Media & Creative Arts

Private Bag X01, Scottsville Pietermaritzburg 3209

Telephone: 0832346681

email: pandajax@gmail.com

Agreement to participate in a research project

I am gathering information for my MA research project at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I would be grateful if you, as a member of the public, would agree to answer some questions.

The project I am working on is entitled *Mobile Media Technologies and Public Space: A Study of the Effect of mobile, wireless and mp3 related technologies on human behaviour and interaction in shopping malls*.

I hope to collect information from mall goers that will help me to understand what role mobile media technologies play in everyday life.

I would like to interview you for approximately 10 minutes. I will take notes from the interview and use this information in my research. I will not try to force you to answer any questions against your will and will not use your name in my research report. You are free to withdraw from the interview at any time. Once my research is complete I will destroy the notes I have made.

If you have further questions after the interview, you may contact me or my supervisor at any time. Our address is listed at the top of this letter and our telephone numbers are as follows: Ms Jaqui Hiltermann 0832346681; Prof. Anton van der Hoven (supervisor): 033 260 5304.

Thank you.

Jaqui Hiltermann

Masters Student in Culture, Communication & Media Studies

University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg Campus)

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT

I..... (name of participant) understand the contents of this letter and the nature of the research project, and consent to participate in the research project.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, if I so wish.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....