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**An Analysis of the Correlation among Fashion Newspaper Coverage and  
Public Relations in the United Kingdom**

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**Master of Philosophy**

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## **Abstract**

This study examines the relationship between fashion PR and fashion coverage in UK newspapers and suggests that such coverage is overwhelmingly generated by PR, to the extent that little if any independent fashion journalism actually exists. Despite the fact that existing research on news sources has pointed to the rising influence of PR on media content, the connection between fashion PR and journalism remains unstudied and overlooked. However, the amount of fashion content within UK newspapers has grown significantly over the past two decades, and now occupies a significant amount of space, extending well beyond fashion pages and supplements.

This thesis uses empirical evidence to shed light upon the largely closed world of fashion PR and its relationship with fashion journalism. Quantitative and qualitative research methods have been used in order to explore the original hypothesis. They include content analysis of a cross section of UK newspapers during 2004; semi-structured interviews in 2005/06 with fashion PR professionals, fashion journalists and fashion industry insiders; as well as participant observation within a fashion PR agency in 2005. The author's personal experience within fashion PR and fashion journalism has played a key role in developing insights into a trading relationship which both parties have traditionally had difficulty discussing.

The research has found that fashion journalism recycles large amounts of PR material, usually with few checks or criticisms. Newspapers in general do not fund original, i.e. non-PR based, fashion research. Thus, supplying ready-made copy to the fashion press, PR acts

as the main provider of access to the latest collections, sample clothes, interviews with designers, celebrities and ‘approved gossip’, hence exerting massive leverage over journalists. Fashion journalists on the other hand remain the gate-keepers as they decide which fashion company ultimately gets coverage. Therefore arguably their main responsibility lies within choosing amongst PR sources as well as when and how to use those. However it has to be noted that even then their power is circumscribed as they cannot ignore some fashion PR. As a result this thesis claims that, despite a limited role in selecting material, fashion journalism is journalism in name only and that it exhibits few if any of the other characteristics that are traditionally ascribed to the profession.

This research has found that despite increased amounts of coverage fashion does not rank highly within the hierarchies of UK newspapers and is of limited importance in terms of traditional news values. Arguably this is why it is often overlooked in studies of journalism and print media. However it does attract large advertising budgets and is thus given pre-booked editorial space. This makes it an important area within UK newspapers, which with its lifestyle rather than news focus operates independently of the news desk. The fact that the largely female fashion department is not as closely overseen by the largely male editorial staff as other areas of newspapers allows room for maximum PR activity. One of this thesis's contributions to knowledge derives from its critical examination of this under-examined area within the news media.

Fashion PR is also overlooked in the more limited scholarly research into the PR industry, which tends to privilege political or corporate communication. Consequently another contribution to knowledge arises from the way in which this thesis critically examines this important PR sector and explores the nature of its work. One aspect of this is the use of celebrities within fashion PR, demonstrating that this is ubiquitous and more prominent than in any other comparative sector. This study further claims that PR plays an important part in the manufacturing and maintenance of celebrities for the purpose of fashion promotion.

However the principal contribution to knowledge derives from the examination of how these two disciplines - fashion journalism and PR - relate to each other. This often furtive relationship has hitherto eluded academic study, arguably due to an underlying conspiracy of silence as well as the informal nature of their relationship. The research has identified contemporary fashion PR as a multifaceted cultural phenomenon with vast economical power that forms the crucial connecting link between the fashion industry and fashion journalism – and hence the wider public, extending its authority into various directions. The overall aim of this study is to contribute to the restricted literature on the topic by providing a sound base towards the creation of a symbiotic relationship between the disciplines of fashion PR and fashion journalism.

## **Contents of Thesis**

Title Page	
Abstract	1
Table of Contents	4
List of Appendices	9
List of Tables	10
List of Figures	13
List of Photographs	14
Glossaries and Abbreviations	15

## **Part I          Introduction & Definitions**

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

1.1. Statement of the Problem	18
1.2 Importance of Study and Contribution to Knowledge	19
1.3 Context	25
1.4. Defining the Research Terms	29

## **Part II**                      **Literature & Methods**

### **Chapter 2: - Review of Literature**

2.1. Introduction	37
2.2. Overall Search of the Literature	38
2.3. PR Literature	41
2.4. Fashion Literature	44
2.5. Fashion in the Marketing Communications Mix	45
2.6. The Relationship between PR & Journalism	46
2.7. Fashion PR	50
2.8. Celebrity Endorsement	52
2.9. Summary	60

### **Chapter 3: - Research Methods**

3.1. Introduction - Methods of Enquiry	62
3.2. Content Analysis	64
3.3. Interviews	69
3.4. Choosing Interviewees	71
3.5. Participant Observation	73
3.6. Access and Ethical Issues	76
3.7 Summary	77

**Part III**                      **Context**

**Chapter 4: - The UK Fashion Media**

4.1. Introduction	79
4.2. The UK Newspaper & Magazine Market	79
4.3. Fashion Coverage within UK Newspapers and Supplements	87
4.4. Fashion Journalism in the UK	88
4.5. Particularities in the Fashion Media	90
4.6. Summary	92

**Chapter 5: - Fashion & Fashion PR in the UK**

5.1. Introduction	93
5.2. An Overview of the UK Fashion Industry	93
5.3. The UK Fashion PR Industry	98
5.4. A Brief Excursion into the History of PR	99
5.5. Fashion PR- A Historical Perspective	101
5.6. Summary	104



## **Part IV      Research**

### **Chapter 6: - Research Analysis**

6.1. Introduction	106
6.2. Pilot Study	106
6.3. The detailed Examination of Newspaper Fashion Content	113
6.4. Tracing PR Material	142
6.5. Summary of Interviews with Industry Professionals	144
6.6. Summary of Interviews	156
6.7. Participant Observation	157
6.8. Summary	166

### **Chapter 7: - Research Findings & Discussion**

7.1. Introduction	168
7.2. Fashion PR's Direct Input into Fashion Newspaper Coverage	168
7.3. PR Techniques	172
7.4. Exclusivity and the Channeling of PR Information	174
7.5. Advertorial and Free Editorial Space	177
7.6. The Celebrity Connection	180
7.7. Fashion Week	190
7.8. Fashion Photography and Fashion PR	193
7.9. Fashion Terminology	197

7.10.	Fashion PR in the Marketing Advertising Mix	200
7.11.	Fashion in Context with Consumer Related PR	206
7.12.	Summary	209

## **Part V        Synthesis & Conclusions**

### **Chapter 8: - Conclusions**

8.1.	Introduction	212
8.2.	Concluding Synthesis	212
8.3.	The Middle Way	219
8.4.	Avenues for Future Research	221

<b>Bibliography</b>	225
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<b>Electronic Resources</b>	247
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<b>Appendices</b>	250
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## **List of Appendices**

1. List of Sample Newspapers used for Content Analysis January – June 2004
2. List of Interviewees
3. Participant Observation Notes (Transcript)
4. Example of Content Analysis Coding Schedule
5. Selection of Interview Notes (Transcript Verbatim)
6. Press Release Matthew Williamson

## **List of Tables**

### **Table: 1**

Newspaper Sample

### **Table: 2**

Question: Is PR responsible for the large existence of fashion coverage within British newspapers?

### **Table: 3**

Daily Newspaper Circulation: June 2004

### **Table: 4**

National Sunday Newspaper Circulation - June 2004

### **Table: 5**

Daily Newspaper Circulation: February 2008

### **Table: 6**

National Sunday Newspaper Circulation: February 2008

### **Table: 7**

Example of Coding Schedule for one Day of Content Analysis Coding

### **Table: 8**

Content Analysis Research Sample

### **Table: 9**

Overall Quantity Fashion Coverage within the Sample of Newspapers  
from 29<sup>th</sup> December 2003 – 6<sup>th</sup> June 2004

### **Table: 10**

Overall Quantity of Fashion Coverage within each of the Sample Newspapers

Table: 11

Type of Fashion Coverage:

Table: 12

Most Mentioned Celebrities.

Table: 13

Fashion Focus in Pages

Table: 14

Specification of Fashion.

Table: 15

Ranking of Designers and Frequency in Pages

Table: 16

Most Frequently Mentioned Department Stores.

Table: 17

Most Frequently Mentioned High Street Stores

Table: 18

Advertising surrounding Fashion Coverage in Pages of which fashion related Pages

Table: 19

Six Point Method as Suggested by Jefkins

Table 20

PR Techniques identified during the Course of Research

Table: 21

Ten Most Frequently Mentioned Celebrities and Number of Mentions

Table 22

Newspaper Headlines following Scarlet Johansson's BAFTA Win wearing Prada

Table 23

List of PR Terms identifies during the Course of Research

## **List of Figures**

### **Figure: 1**

Deductive Reasoning - Top Down Approach

### **Figure: 2**

Structure of Sample PR Agency

### **Figure: 3**

The Marketing Mix Components.

## **List of Photographs**

### **Photograph 1**

Liz Hurley in Versace Pin Dress at the Premier of Four Weddings and a Funeral, 1994

### **Photograph 2**

Scarlett Johansson in Prada at the 2004 BAFTA Awards, London

### **Photograph 3**

Examples of Fashion Photography

### **Photograph 4**

Examples of Fashion Advertising



## **Glossary and Abbreviations**

ABC	Actual based census data
BAFTA	British Academy of Film and Television Arts
BC	Back Cover
BFC	British Fashion Council
DTI	Department of Trade & Industry
FC	Front Cover (Magazine)
FP	Front Page (Newspaper)
FPR	Fashion PR
FW	Fashion Week
IFC	Inside Front Cover (Magazines)
IBC	Inside Back Cover (Magazines)
IPR	Institute of PR
IPRA	International PR Association
LFW	London Fashion Week
LVMH	Louis Vuitton Moet Hennessy
NUJ	National Union of Journalists
PR	PR
PRC	PR Consultant(s)
PRCA	PR Consultants Association
PRO	PR Officer(s)
PRSA	PR Society of America

ROP	Run of Paper
WWII	World War Two
WWW	World Wide Web

## **Part I - Introduction**

## **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

### **1.1. Statement of the Problem**

The aims of this thesis are concerned with investigating and understanding the extent to which fashion PR is responsible for fashion media content within UK newspapers and its role in the wider fashion context. It seeks to explore the way PR techniques are applied in order to achieve the desired results of unpaid newspaper coverage (as opposed to advertising, which is paid for coverage) in the fashion context. Third party and celebrity endorsement are special areas of concern. The enquiry further looks at the seemingly non-critical nature of fashion coverage arguing that very little checking and criticism goes into the fashion pages.

The study comprises of two main research questions:

- 1. What is the nature of fashion journalism and fashion newspaper coverage and its susceptibility to fashion PR?*
- 2. What are the key methods applied by the fashion PR industry?*

The author's experience within the fashion PR industry brought up empirical observations, which pointed towards a substantial lack of academic research. These primary observations ultimately led to this study and are thus the reasons for it being of a deductive nature.

Three different research methods were chosen and applied in order to approach the research questions accordingly. These consisted of six months of content analysis of newspaper fashion coverage within the eight main UK newspapers to identify the actual amount of fashion coverage in existence. This was followed by a series of semi-structured interviews with fashion PR insiders and members of the fashion press to establish the source and nature of the coverage. In addition a small scale participant observation study within a London-based fashion PR agency was carried out to gain primary insight into the day-to-day dealings of the fashion PR industry.

## **1.2. Importance of Study & Contribution to Knowledge**

The importance of this study relates directly to the importance that the field of fashion PR has assumed in recent years, and the influence it has had on the fashion print media as a whole. Franklin et al (2008, p.5) in their report on ‘The Quality and Independence of British Journalism’ argue that “...the normal journalistic approach to PRs [...] is grossly self-serving from the point of view of journalists. It glosses over, ignores or even denies the fact that much of current journalism [...] is PR in the sense that stories, ideas, features and interviews are either suggested, or in the extreme actually written by PR people.”

Theaker (2004, p.30) emphasises that, “PR can be a powerful agent - handle it with care.” The suggestion that PR may be held responsible for shaping news content in the national and local news media is increasingly suggested by journalists, academics and PR professionals (Fletcher, 2006; Franklin, 1997, pp. 19-21 and 2006). The latest contribution

emerges from Franklin et al (2008) who recognise the need for further empirical analysis.

The originality of this thesis in part arises from fashion's position as an under examined part of the news media. Through empirical analysis of methods and formulas applied by the fashion PR industry, this study contributes to the understanding of its specific function in the creation of fashion newspaper coverage, thus adding scholarly credibility to what is otherwise a relationship which is taken for granted by insiders but ignored by outsiders and so validating it as an important area of study. Qualitative and quantitative findings have identified a significant lack of objectivity and scepticism within fashion reporting. This led to the notion that critical/investigative journalism within fashion is virtually non existent but rather serves as a tool for the fashion industry with PR forming the crucial link between the two.

This thesis endorses Tungate's (2005) observations and confirms his claim that major fashion advertisers are holding immense power over the fashion press, thereby identifying fashion journalism as a largely autonomous part within UK newspapers with its main function being of a commercial nature rather than the uncovering of news. This research has found that a dedicated amount of pages (pre-booked editorial space) is given to fashion coverage every week in return for advertising. Within these perimeters there is ample room for PR activities and it is ultimately down to the journalists to choose between the various PR sources on offer. Thus a further contribution to knowledge is the verification of the economic value of fashion PR towards UK newspapers. Expanding upon the works of McRobbie (1998) this thesis introduces fashion PR into the academic debate and firmly

states its key position within the fashion newspaper reporting, whilst launching it into the wider context of fashion culture.

Turner (2004, p.26) has recently noted that the industry around celebrity ‘creates highly visible products that most of us buy at one time or another and which play a significant part of our everyday lives’. Celebrity endorsement is a conspicuous and fundamental aspect of fashion PR and is in line with previous research in that area (Turner, 2004; Dyer, 2002; McCracken, 1980). This thesis demonstrates the omnipresence of celebrities within fashion PR and identifies celebrity endorsement as the key method which is more prominent than in any other comparative sector. It further claims that PR plays a firm part in the manufacturing and maintenance of celebrities for the purpose of fashion promotion.

Lastly, the research has identified contemporary fashion PR as a multifaceted cultural phenomenon with vast economical power, which forms alongside advertising a crucial connecting link between the fashion industry and fashion journalism, extending its authority into various directions.

When first setting out on this project, the main aim was to explore and understand the phenomenon of fashion PR and its direct impact on print media content. During three years in the fashion PR industry the author felt that there was a substantial lack of clear understanding and therefore a need for theoretical development. This realisation led to the decision of using existing contacts and embark on a detailed research project with the view to adding empirical foundation to an under-researched yet large segment of PR.

Prior to launching into this investigation a preliminary study was carried out to test the approach towards the research enquiry. In August 2003 a telephone survey to 10 PR agencies representing fashion companies of all categories was undertaken in order to establish their view towards print media coverage. It emerged that the vast majority of fashion PR activities are specifically tailored towards coverage within the print media, primarily newspapers and magazines. This survey further aided the decision process towards establishing a sound research sample. Achieving coverage within newspapers it transpired is one of the prime objectives of the UK fashion PR industry. According to Julian Vogel, director of the UK's largest fashion PR firm, Modus Publicity, it is due to their newsworthiness and large readership that instant credibility is given to a featured product (Interview 6<sup>th</sup> June 2007). The newspapers listed below were suggested by the approached companies, as prime target publications for fashion PR exercises in the UK:



### **Suggested Research Sample**

1. *The Daily Telegraph*
2. *The Times*
3. *The Daily Mail*
4. *The Guardian*
5. *The Independent*
6. *The Express*
7. *The Financial Times*
8. *The Mirror*

Through a small scale content analysis monitoring fashion coverage within the above newspapers every day for one week it was determined that during the week beginning 8th September 2003, a total of 110 pages were related to fashion. Although it was difficult to establish what exactly accounts as fashion coverage, on further analysis it emerged that there were 44 articles with a direct link to fashion. Another 11 articles were celebrity interviews with a direct focus on fashion. The remaining coverage consisted of strong visual components.

This was one of the most essential findings of the pilot study pointing out the vast importance of photography within fashion coverage. During that week 134 photographic images, including models as well as flat product shots were detected.

Overall this initial data demonstrated the considerable daily presence of fashion coverage within UK newspapers. Importantly, the number of features tripled the following week (15th September 2003) which was London Fashion Week (LFW). Throughout this pilot study it emerged that the vast majority of articles and product features were written in an entirely non-critical style, which raised the question as to how much journalistic research is undertaken and to what extent the PR industry supplies ready-made information.

Six months of content analysis were carried out on the basis of the preliminary study. Fashion coverage was monitored daily for one week every month within the same eight UK newspapers and its relevance to fashion PR was examined. Evaluation of quantity (i.e. number of pages and column inches given to fashion coverage), frequency (did fashion coverage appear within newspapers and to what extent) as well as the nature of the coverage (i.e. feature article, interview, photo story, product shot or celebrity feature) was carried out. A special coding schedule had been developed previously in order to effectively analyse the emerging results (see Appendix 4).

Furthermore semi-structured interviews were carried out with a number of people from the fashion PR industry and the fashion press, including journalists, photographers and stylists (see Appendix 2 for list of interviewees). The interviewees were chosen on the base of the content analysis findings, yet the nature of the fashion industry is such that access is often difficult or denied unless previous professional or personal contact exists. Hence the ‘snow-balling’ technique (Sayer, 1994) was applied as a method where interviewing was also used as a way of developing contacts and gain access to otherwise difficult

interviewees. During those interviews handwritten notes were taken and a coding schedule helped in evaluating the data. Interestingly both, fashion PR professionals as well as fashion press agree that one could not exist without the other.

The third part of research has been participant observation. A London based fashion/consumer PR agency was visited six times in six consecutive months during 2005, examining and analysing the day-to-day workings of a fashion PR environment. The data collected largely confirmed the hypothesis that PR is directly accountable for print media coverage.

### **1.3. Context**

At the time of writing the Clothing and Footwear Industry Market Review (2005)<sup>1</sup> stated that the fashion/clothing sector forms one of the UK's largest and most important industries, employing approximately 220,000 people, the majority of whom are women. Although according to this report large-scale manufacturers have decreased notably in the UK, the trend for large retailers to become involved in manufacture, marketing and sales made it a major employer in certain regions across the UK. Imports account for 95% of the fashion and textiles market, however many of these imported goods bear UK labels. They are designed, marketed and distributed from this country. Overall the fashion industry is the nation's fourth largest market<sup>2</sup> and in 2005 was worth £44.45 billion (Clothing & Footwear Industry Market Review, 2005).

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.researchandmarkets.com>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.statistics.gov.uk>

More recent figures claim that the UK market in 2007 for clothing and footwear was worth an estimated £48.55b. This was divided between clothing (£42.45bn) and footwear (£6.1bn). According to the Clothing & Footwear Market Review (2008) both of them together account for barely 6% of total consumer spending. Arguably the main reason for this record low proportion of consumer spending has been the declining prices of these products. Most items of clothing and footwear now cost less than they did at the turn of the century.

Underpinning the dramatic decline in prices has been the sourcing of clothing and footwear from countries that offer low labour costs. More than 90% of most apparel lines are imported. Low prices have also been maintained by fierce high-street competition, with numerous distinct sectors competing: department stores (e.g. Debenhams), chains such as Marks & Spencer (M&S) and Primark, supermarkets (e.g. ASDA and Tesco) and sports chains such as JJB Sports are all in competition with the specialists, both multiples (led by Next and Arcadia) and independent boutiques.

Despite the surfeit of discounting, polarisation between 'cheap' and 'luxury' is a growing feature of the market. The Clothing and Footwear Market Review (2008) predicts that the number of consumers who turn their backs on the bargain-basement products will increase in the future. Luxury brands from Europe and the US are spending record amounts on advertising to attract aspiring consumers, and cheap clothing is increasingly being tainted by ethical issues (labour conditions and the environment). However, industry research has shown that there is no sign of a major surge in market value, so the share of consumer

spending taken by clothing and footwear is likely to continue to fall over the next 5 years (2008 to 2012).

Despite significant changes in the market, promotion plays a crucial role within the fashion industry. Mintel (2004 & 2008) suggests that in response to the huge choice of fashion items particularly on the high street, fashion editorial pages have gained much higher product density. Newspapers and magazines are acting as the main source of information to the end customer and act as the connecting link between the fashion industry and the consumer.

Both Moloney (2002) as well as the CIPR (2003), claim that the UK PR industry is the most highly developed in Europe with a rate of growth in the number of PR jobs at all levels being higher than that of any comparable function over the last fifteen years<sup>3</sup>. There are more than 200 PR agencies representing fashion clients operating from London alone, which is more than twice the number as in other European “fashion capitals”, such as Milan or Paris<sup>4</sup>. Julian Vogel of Modus Publicity, along with other PR insiders interviewed during the course of this study claims that there are about 8000 fashion brands, represented by over 500 PR consultants (Interview notes, 6<sup>th</sup> June 2007). Most UK based fashion companies have some form of press representation, either through agencies, freelance consultants or in-house staff (Fashion Monitor, PR section, 2003).

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<sup>3</sup> This has been claimed by the Institute of PR - <http://www.ipr.org.uk/direct/careers.asp?v1=whatis> accessed on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2003

<sup>4</sup> Information obtained from the British Fashion Council, December 2003

Despite these facts initial research shows that this specific area remains academically neglected. Although universities across the UK are now offering PR courses as well as specific modules within fashion degrees, it became obvious that the restricted amount of literature calls for further academic enquiry.

This thesis investigates fashion as part of the consumer section of PR and focuses on the detailed analysis of the two-step relation and correlation between consumer PR and its effects on fashion newspaper coverage, and though fashion PR is now largely seen as a global phenomenon, the UK has been chosen as the focus for the purpose of this study.

Arguably fashion is not an absolute need but to a large extent a created one and this study suggests that the PR industry plays a vital role in creating those 'needs'. Empirical research in the form of print media content analysis, participant observation and semi structured interviews, has been carried out in order to highlight and confirm this theory.

The PR industry uses an array of channels to reach target audiences, such as direct targeting of print media, sponsorship of events, websites, television, radio, cinema, word of mouth, as well as direct promotion. However it is important to note that a telephone survey about the use of PR methods carried out in August 2003 and again in March 2005 to 50 UK consumer PR agencies, representing fashion companies of all categories (designer, mid- and low price market), it transpired that most PR activities are specifically tailored towards coverage within newspapers. This finding is particularly interesting as the average circulation of newspapers has been in decline over the past few decades (Mintel, 2004).

Weekend newspaper supplements have become much more fashion-oriented and are laid out in magazine-style. They are often highly fashion focused and popular with a broad demographic spread of consumers and some – such as The Mail on Sunday’s ‘You Magazine’, the FT’s ‘How to Spend it Magazine’ as well as The Times’ ‘Style Magazine’ – are said to be particularly influential in motivating consumers to buy featured fashion items (Mintel, 2004).

As a result, this thesis focuses on the impact PR has on fashion coverage within UK print media only, with special attention to newspapers. All of the surveyed agencies named the broadsheets and tabloids listed on page 20 (Suggested Research Sample) as prime target publications for their activities, thus the sample for the content analysis has been chosen accordingly. In order to understand the research parameters it was important to look at the UK newspaper market in close detail. This will be discussed in Chapter 2, ‘The UK Fashion Media’.

#### **1.4. Defining the Research Terms**

- **PR & Fashion PR**

Finding an acceptable academic definition for PR is complex. Since the industry seemingly lacks regulation, this research has not found one specific overall definition for the discipline but many. There is however no definition available for fashion PR, which falls under the category of consumer PR and is largely used in a marketing context. This chapter discusses

the various definitions of PR and concludes with the presentation of one acceptable definition that will be applied for this study.

PR, due to its complexity and different functions, is a field more often characterised by what it does rather than what it is. Throughout the literature it is mostly activities that are included under the rubric of PR that are being defined and not the actual discipline. These activities include publicity, press agency, event management, media relations, corporate social responsibility and sponsorship. Moreover, many PR professionals seem to perceive that the production and dissemination of communication messages is the answer to every PR problem (Ledingham, 1988). Furthermore, as Bruning and Ledingham (2000, p.11) point out in their publication of 'PR as Relationship Management' within the Journal of PR Research:

“...a misplaced emphasis on communication production and dissemination can lead to a basic confusion as to the purpose of PR, and a tendency to measure programmatic initiatives in terms of communication output rather than in relational or behavioural outcomes.”

Arguably PR by its nature is devoted to serving particular interests by presenting them to the public in the most favourable light. Therefore the main aim of any PR consultant and particularly within the consumer sector is to create an advantageous image for their client. In order to achieve this, a variety of research and communication techniques (discussed later in this chapter) are applied. According to Kitchen (1997) the most widely practiced



form of PR is publicity. Arguably the most familiar instrument of publicity is the press release, which provides the mass media with raw material and background information for a news story.

Bruning and Ledingham (2001) have found that many organisations still view PR primarily as a means of generating favourable publicity. Empiric evidence for this study shows that this is particularly the case within fashion PR. Davies (2008) refers to all consumer/lifestyle related public relations as soft PR. He argues that by delivering a good story the PR practitioner offers the journalist a means of satisfying users of his medium. Soft journalism therefore is concerned with entertainment rather than truth. Hard PR on the other hand refers to current affairs, politics, business and financial PR.

Bruning and Ledingham (2001) argue that the rationale for PR is found not in the management of reciprocal relationships between an organisation and its publics, but rather in

“The credibility attached to information that has been examined by reporters through third party endorsement by the media.” (Nakra, 1991, p.42 quoted in Bruning & Ledingham, 2001, p.12)

Despite the fact that PR is a field undergoing continuing change in terms of perspective, role and evaluation, numerous scholars contend that the contribution of PR to corporate goals is still a mystery to much of senior management (Hon, 1998) and that the field suffers from the lack of an agreed-up approach for evaluating PR initiatives (Dozier & Grunig, 1995).

According to Theaker (2004, p.30), “PR people provide a ready supply of material to fill the ever-increasing hours of airtime and acres of newsprint, whether the subject is the latest war or celebrity, and journalists do not always challenge these sources. The management of news by PR is often called 'spin' but is not confined to the political arena”. “While PR professionals typically rely on such approaches to formulating strategy and production, they can perhaps be forgiven for placing any such “spin” on their reporting because the industry is highly competitive and customers can be difficult to persuade. One of the continuing and most demanding functions of the PR counselor is to gain public acceptance of new ideas and new technology; a tough assignment given human nature's innate resistance to change” (Cutlip, 1994 p.196).

Grunig and Hunt (1984) identified four styles of relating to publics or models of PR that they believed were not only representations of four stages in the history of PR but also four representations of forms of PR practiced today. These models are: (a) press agency, publicity model, or one-way asymmetric; (b) the public information model, one-way symmetric; (c) the two-way asymmetric model; and (d) the two-way symmetric model. The

researchers characterised the four models based on two dimensions: direction of communication (one-way monologue or two-way dialogue) and balance of intended effect (asymmetric, unbalanced or symmetric, balanced). “The practice of PR is too complex, too fluid, and impinged by far too many variables for the academy to force it into the four boxes known as the four models of PR. Even worse, to promulgate one of the four boxes as the best and most effective model not only tortures the reality of practicing PR but has problems, even as a normative theory. It fails to capture the complexity and multiplicity of the PR environment” (Cameron, Mitrook & Sallot, 1997 p.33). PR embraces a great deal and assumes responsibility for even more, thus an operationalisation of the term for the purposes of this study is provided in the following section.

- **Working Definition for PR applied for this Study**

According to the website of the official industry body in the UK, the Chartered Institute of PR (2005), PR is defined as follows:

“...PR is about reputation – the result of what you do. What you say and what others say about you... PR is the discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behaviour. It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics...”<sup>5</sup> (CIPR, 2007)

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.cipr.co.uk/direct/careers.asp?v1=whatis> [accessed on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2007]

This approach arguably falls under the category of theoretical frameworks which lacks behavioural analysis. It also seems to disregard the important fact that particularly within consumer and therefore fashion PR the emphasis is on selling products, which is why fashion PR is often mentioned in the marketing context. Indeed most consumer focused PR is also known as marketing PR or as suggested by Davies (2008), as ‘soft PR’. It is about product information wrapped up in a story rather than the communication of political and current affairs where the messages have to be projected to a number of different audiences. Morris & Goldsworthy (2008) note that “marketing PR has to be creative and ingenious, creating irresistible stories and images that the media will want to use [...] indeed one way of looking at this aspect of the PR industry is as an industry which shadows the media it wishes to supply, studying its needs closely and deploying considerable resources creativity and bought in journalistic skills to create its irresistible products.”

Considering the above, further definitions of PR were examined. The following one by the PR Consultants Association (2004) has been chosen to form the basis for this study and all research has been carried out within the parameters of this definition:

“PR is the method of defining messages and communicating them to targeted audiences in order to influence a desired response”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.prca.org.uk/default.asp?pid=6> [accessed on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2004]

The hypothesis is that fashion PR, by creating ‘defined messages’, is responsible for a very large proportion of the fashion media content within UK newspapers and magazines. Using these particular channels, a broad spectrum of audiences is being targeted, which can be seen as a way of ‘influencing certain audiences into the desired response’. The desired response with regards to this study would be achieving positive media coverage which ultimately results in persuading the end consumer to buy fashion products. Thus due to the marketing function that is synonym with fashion PR, for the purpose of this study the above definition could be tightened further and fashion PR could be described as:

“The method which communicates messages in order to achieve, as far as possible, the desired media coverage without direct payment”

This definition puts the emphasis on the fact that fashion PR is in a different category to non-consumer PR functions. It points out the strong focus on maximising positive media coverage and minimising negative coverage in the targeted media without direct payment (as opposed to advertising).

## **Part II – Literature & Methods**

## **Chapter 2: Review of the Literature**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter examines the literature of the fast growing area of fashion PR. As mentioned in the introduction, the limited literature in this particular field both nationally and internationally at the time of writing was a primary reason for this study. Nevertheless, since the beginning of this thesis in 2003 interest has grown and more books, articles and websites are now available. Most of these sources however are predominantly of a commercial nature and works with a focus on the fashion and PR industries including their respective relationships could not be traced within the peer reviewed literature. A considerable number of books has been published on the subject of fashion marketing, offering a brief excursion into fashion PR but on the whole this area remains under-researched. In this regard, McRobbie (1998, p.61), emphasises that:

“The relatively closed world of fashion makes it more difficult to untangle the relationship between fashion design and the fashion media. We are not able to simply place the designers in one corner and the editors and journalists in the other. There is so much mediation between the two (through PR departments, press offices and agents) that the very idea of looking at how the fashion media ‘represents’ fashion design is immediately more complicated than it might seem”.

Arguably the fashion industry is in a separate category as it consists of a very close network within which people tend to work through contacts. Professionals within the industry tend

to have various qualifications and interests which is often the reason why designers may end up becoming fashion journalists or journalists use their network and become fashion PRs.

Most PR research seems to have been undertaken in the areas of business, financial and governmental PR with further studies into the measurability of PR activities. However with lifestyle journalism having become an established part within UK newspapers, this thesis has found that there remains a substantial lack of clear understanding and a need for theoretical development particularly within the fashion section.

This chapter looks at the overall literature emerging from the areas of fashion, journalism and PR and then focuses on works directly associated with the topic. Literature from the related areas of marketing, advertising as well as the closely linked field of celebrity endorsement is also reviewed.

## **2.2. Overall Search of the Literature**

The search for the literature began by examining current and previous works on the overall topics of PR and fashion. Various sources were identified, which included hard copy as well as electronic databases. The University of Westminster's and the Central Saint Martins' libraries provided substantial information on mainly secondary sources for both topics. The British Library as well as the Collindale Newspaper Library provided information on historical newspaper fashion coverage which was an important starting



point in order to understand the development of fashion coverage and consequently fashion PR within the UK.

Later the investigation became more focused by narrowing the examination to consumer and fashion PR. The Questia online library catalogue provided vital information on publications surrounding those research topics in particular. The focus was on primary and secondary sources which included books, articles from UK trade magazines and academic journals, articles from UK newspapers, statistics, research reports and conference papers all with a focal point on fashion and PR. Most of the findings however have been predominantly secondary sources. Though the literature on both PR and fashion is vast, and includes theoretical as well as empirical approaches from sociologists (Leopold, 1992), anthropologists (Roach & Eicher, 1965, Proctor, 1978 & Eicher 1992), historians (Bell, 1976 and Wilson, 1985) as well as marketers (Easy 2002), business writers and industry professionals, the combination of the two is hardly in existence.

The most widely read PR industry publication in the UK is 'PR Week' which looks at PR efforts throughout all parts of the industry. It rewards PR companies once a year with industry awards and also publishes an annual magazine presenting the most successful PR individuals, some of whom are known and recognised for their work within fashion. The April 2005 issue features an article on fashion PR with the focus on celebrity endorsement, an essential and well documented part of consumer PR which will be discussed in detail later on in this chapter.

The main trade publication for the UK fashion industry is 'Drapers Record'. Founded in the 1880s it provides insights into the development of the women's and children's fashion industry. For men's wear a separate publication exists, called 'Men's Wear Weekly'. The two main industry publications focusing on fashion PR are 'The Fashion Monitor' and 'The Diary'. The Fashion Monitor is the UK's leading news, contacts and events information service for the fashion, beauty and lifestyle PR industries. It is known as the 'industry bible' and provides substantial information in table format on fashion, beauty and lifestyle contacts, photographers, stylists, fashion events, media contacts, make-up artists and model agencies and also entails a comprehensive calendar of UK and overseas fashion-related events for the whole year. The Diary is similar in its contents but is much smaller in format and easier to handle on a day-to-day basis.

Interestingly most articles surrounding fashion promotion have been found within advertising journals such as the 'Journal of Advertising' or the 'Journal of Consumer Affairs'. On the whole PR has been investigated far more from the consumer perspective rather than the media side. Some directly related though non-academic works include an article by Penny Cottee (2003) as well as a short paper by fashion PR consultant Madeleine DeVries (1998) entitled "Working with the Fashion Press", both of which are descriptive rather than analytical. DeVries explains how to keep informed about trends and how to communicate with the fashion press which is along the same lines as Linda Morton's article "Targeting Midlife Men" (2002) in which she considers the fashion conscious middle-aged man as a new target for fashion PR.

### 2.3. PR Literature

In order to understand the full context in view of this thesis it was important to review the literature of the PR industry as a whole. It emerged that large numbers of textbooks have been written on the subject of PR. Outlined and discussed here are the most relevant works with regard to this study.

The majority of PR literature is hortatory<sup>7</sup> or looks at the origins of the profession and follows it through history. Ewen (1996) for example explains how Ivy Lee, one of the American nation's first corporate PR men, just before World War I (WWI) helped create a new climate in which PR and corporate image management would become paramount in American society. Ewen chronicles the development of a culture that is now arguably taken for granted. He examines the social conditions that spawned PR and the ideas that inspired its strategists, as well as the increasing use of images as tools of persuasion. He focuses in particular on the early years of the twentieth century when corporate monopolies, the exploitation of labour, and unscrupulous business practices were the target of blistering attacks from a muckraking press and an increasingly resentful public. Ewen's historic report provides important insights for this study. As fashion PR has only become a profession in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Ewen's account sheds light upon the PR techniques that have later been adopted by the fashion PR industry, particularly the

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<sup>7</sup> Publications, such as those published by the Institute of PR (IPR) are of a hortatory nature. They mainly aim at the PR professional and offer advice on how to run effective campaigns, planning and managing a PR department, or adding creativity to the job. The same goes for the various PR guides that have been written for business professionals. They act as aids, giving advice on how to run a successful company by using certain PR techniques. Guides like these have been published by PR professionals like Chris Genasi with the title "Winning Reputations – How to be your own Spin Doctor", or Jim Dunn (1999), "PR – Techniques that work", London: Hawksmere

importance of images. Fashion and arguably most of lifestyle PR could not exist without the constant use of images. In this regard the works of Newsom (2000) and Grunig & Hunt (1984) are of prime importance, though consumerism is not a major focus in either of their works, rather the emphasis is on PR decision-making, strategy and evaluation, yet both works have a strong focus on ethics, which within fashion is an important and constantly scrutinised issue.

Moloney (2002, p. 42) argues that: “PR is in its most wide spread, popular and pervasive form when it works for consumption”, estimating that 70% of all PR jobs are actually devoted to marketing tasks. Fashion PR is often referred to in the marketing context as it is ultimately about selling a product. This is the case in many consumer related PR efforts thus leaving it as a non defined area. With this in mind looking at the various different aspects and areas of the PR industry Molony (2002) argues that PR is in need of reform. He claims that as a £2.3 billion UK industry with up to 50,000 jobs and a pervasive influence on politics and markets it has a poor reputation and has escaped academic scrutiny (Molony, 2002, p.1). This last point in particular has been a recurring one whilst reviewing the literature, particularly within the consumer section. There seems ongoing confusion mainly within the PR & advertising context.

In this regard Ries & Ries (2002) argue that advertising has lost much of its original importance and that the aspect of PR has been heavily underrated in recent years. The authors claim that the advertising-led approach to marketing communications is no longer

the most efficient way to launch and build brands, an observation that is very much in line with the findings of this thesis. In fact they further argue that PR should initially be used to create brand awareness and advertising should be applied only once the brand is firmly established to help maintain it (Ries, 2002). Arguably the educated Western consumer's trust in advertising is low, which puts an even greater emphasis on PR. Taking into consideration Bernays' (1923) theory that PR is playing at the subconscious it can therefore be seen as a means of introducing brands into the mind of the consumer, especially when applied through 'trustworthy' channels, i.e. newspapers and television (Ries, 2002).

This is of particular importance in view of the marketing function within fashion PR. Okonkwo (2007) suggests that fashion marketing and in particular now e-marketing should be applied in order to maintain already established brands as well as secure their positioning within today's consumer society. This author touches on a number of aspects that this thesis is concerned with yet it lacks theoretical analysis. This has been a recurrent finding throughout the whole of the literature review as the notion of most books concerned with fashion, promotion and the fashion industry is of a descriptive rather than of an analytical nature.

Morris & Goldsworthy (2008) recently pointed out that PR, despite being a relatively small industry, is one that has grown exponentially in the past two decades, identifying it as a vital component in the modern mass media machine. As Beckett agrees "it furnishes press

releases, interviews, story ideas, tips and copy to any journalist with space or time to fill” (Beckett, 2008).

## **2.4. Fashion Literature**

The literature on the subject of fashion is vast with approaches from a variety of angles, including sociological, cultural, historical as well as practical. For the purpose of this study a cross section of publications has been reviewed. Bruzzi & Gibson (2000) have contributed substantially with critical analysis of consumer behaviour, fashion consumption and fashion as a subculture. They look at fashion imagery (though in a non PR context) and its association with celebrities including a detailed account of catwalk show politics, outlining the importance of the presence of fashion editors and celebrities alike as well as their special seating arrangements. In terms of this thesis both celebrity endorsement as well as catwalk shows have been identified as vital tools within fashion PR practice.

McRobbie (in Bruzzi & Gibson, 2000) identifies the lack of criticism within fashion journalism which has been a recurrent issue with regard to the coherent discussion and further considers fashion as a “conflict free zone, both in academic terms and in the wider world of journalistic commentary.” McRobbie is interested in the process that turns a fashion designer into a ‘star’ and suggests that strong personal networks as well as promotional efforts are responsible for that. This author clearly recognises fashion PR as a driving force within fashion design yet her interests are concerned with the wider debate

about internal politics and organisation of fashion design thus not making a case for investigation with regards to fashion PR and its role in creating fashion media coverage.

## **2.5. Fashion in the Marketing Communications Mix**

The importance of promotion and presentation in the fashion industry, from its use as an amateur tool to its development as a multi-media professional industry is a recurring factor (Constantino, 1998). Many books and papers have been published on the subject of fashion within communications in a marketing context. Fashion PR and fashion marketing have many crossovers and in the past fashion PR has been regarded as a sub area of fashion marketing. However this has changed in recent years and marketing is now largely integrated within fashion PR campaigns. This includes aspects such as range planning and combining design sense with commercial realism (Easy, 1995). The impact of the Internet on marketing and distribution of fashion products has been vital and so has celebrity endorsement. In fact Easy has identified the latter as a main tool within the fashion marketing mix, which is a topic of great importance within this study.

Solomon and Rabolt (2003) take a comprehensive look at fashion consumers by relating their buying behaviour directly to fashion products. Looking at fashion advertising in particular, the authors use advertisements to demonstrate how the fashion industry attempts to communicate with the fashion consumer. PR is mentioned mainly in relation with social responsibility, aiming at fashion companies to use their potential in making themselves known for a good cause. This is a very important aspect and fashion PR efforts have

recently been focusing more than ever on supporting good causes. Designers and fashion companies have been creating items specifically for charity, with one of the most famous ones being TopShop's T-Shirt range in support of breast cancer, which became a big PR story in itself.

## **2.6. The Relationship between PR & Journalism**

A recurring discussion in the context of PR and journalism is where the dependencies lie. The relationship has often been described as mutually dependent yet the suggestion that PR people may be held responsible for shaping news content in the national and local news media is increasingly suggested by journalists, academics and PR professionals (Hobsbawm, 2010, Fletcher, 2006; Franklin, 1997, pp. 19-21 and 2006). Franklin et al (2008, p.5) in their report on 'The Quality and Independence of British Journalism' argue that "...the normal journalistic approach to PRs [...] is grossly self-serving from the point of view of journalists. It glosses over, ignores or even denies the fact that much of current journalism [...] is PR in the sense that stories, ideas, features and interviews are either suggested, or in the extreme actually written by PR people.", yet cuts in newspaper budgets, a decreasing workforce within the newsroom, as well as an overload of information call for an increasing need of PR.

Hargreaves (2003) notes that "it is the erosion on trust that has damaged modern politics, business, public relations and journalism." However Morris & Goldsworthy (2008) argue



that as long as 'PR is honest and truthful' there is nothing wrong in journalists seeking information from PR sources. Indeed Beckett (2008) argues that the amount of genuinely new, original and properly researched journalism has always been a small part of the whole. "Much of what the mainstream media has written and broadcast over the last 50 years has been driven by an agenda set by other organisations or simply recycled from other media outlets." With regard to this thesis he further argues that the growth in lifestyle journalism, the expansion of the media space and the relative decline in reporting resources in mainstream media has tipped the balance of influence even more favourably towards PR. PR in its true sense has come a long way since Walter Lippman suggested that public opinion, responds not to the environment, but to the pseudo environment constructed by the news media. According to Manning (2001) the public is growing ever more suspicious about the ways in which media coverage is 'spun and controlled' by a powerful PR industry. He suggests that powerful corporations dominate news agendas and that increasingly even less powerful groups employ sophisticated media strategies and new communications technologies to get their message across.

Davies (2008) expands on this notion and argues that the news media is relying heavily on 'manufactured news' supplied by PR and news agencies. Based upon his own research as well as the findings of Lewis et al (2008) Davies accuses UK journalists of freely accepting ready-made PR copy without further checking or criticising and argues that the modern media has been corrupted to provide a distorted view of the news. This he claims is partly due to time constraints and an increased work volume with journalists having to provide stories in a 'production line' manner. He refers to newspaper journalism as 'churnalism'

and claims that 43% of today's UK news is entirely fabricated by the PR industry with journalists copying stories that were created and written by PR professionals. Davies' as well as Manning's findings firmly support the hypothesis and empirical evidence of this thesis albeit in the more important area of current affairs.

If journalists rely heavily on PR sources the objective nature of their writing is of course questionable, however as Falconi (2008) argues both PR & journalism concede that pure objectivity is impossible to achieve, the attribution of information to identified and accessible sources and the quoting of different sides to a controversy allegedly help to produce objective and unbiased accounts. He further notes that for a journalist the concept of neutrality should be a much more relevant credibility factor than just equal coverage. A journalist, unless his function is merely bureaucratic, should be actively neutral (Falconi, 2008).

Lloyd (2008) suggests that the future journalist will have to be much more open and honest about where they get their information from and what they are doing with it. He argues that "This transparency will manifest itself through hyperlinks and disclosures but it will be policed by the accountability mechanisms that thrive on the Internet. Both journalists and consumers will become more media literate. The free media market online will drive out false information as trusted sources prove their worth over time and attract the most traffic."

Arguably this is the new reality of trust in the digital age. Yet Lloyd further notes that “Journalists have nothing to fear from this process. Public Relations has nothing to fear either, if it is honest. Together they should continue their mutually sceptical and dependent relationship.”

Fashion journalism is in a different category to traditional journalism and does not have the security and confidence of other media worlds (McRobbie, 1998). Tunstall (1971) argues that because specialist fields in journalism associated with consumer-based activities are advertising-revenue led, they inevitably have a closer relationship with the industry which manufactures and promotes the product, since this is both the source of ‘news’ and of revenue. Fashion, because of its feminine status, is something of a special case in this respect. It has a presence in both the women’s magazine market and in the daily press. Where the readership for the women’s magazines can be assumed to be interested in fashion, there is arguably less of an emphasis on fashion having to prove itself. But in the daily press, where the staff journalists are predominantly male, even in the context of appearing within the remit of the ‘women’s page’, fashion is more unsure of its status. The images might be designed to shock, but the text remains culturally reassuring. On these pages fashion reporting and writing conform to a pattern wherein no real offence is ever spoken and no rules appear to be broken.

“Public relations and journalism are not the same” (Hargreaves, 2003) and Davies (2008) note that “in the case of both PR and journalism the related notions of trust and truth are central to their professional activities. It is vital, therefore, that both "hard" journalists and public relations practitioners act with professional integrity. Transparency of the communicator's identity is crucial. Power needs to rest with a citizen public exercising the right to give or withhold belief in the communicator and in determining his or her reputation for veracity and also to exercise real power as consumers and voters”. IN this regards Hargreaves (2003) argues that journalists should first and foremost serve the interest of their reader and PR people are employed to serve the interest of the organization they are representing. Both requires trust and “without trust politicians, business people, journalists and PR practitioners cannot do their jobs.” (Hargreaves, 2003 p.204) He sums up the relationship by pointing out that “these people are all in the same boat and perhaps they would row to better effect if everyone acknowledged that”.

## **2.7. Fashion PR**

Although fashion PR as an area has not been subject to academic scrutiny, the works discussed in this section have contributed to the restricted literature in various ways. Mainly they look at fashion as part of a whole such as Ewen et al (1992) who take a historical perspective at the propagation of the fashion industry in 19<sup>th</sup> Century America, focusing largely on the correlation between fashion and consumer consciousness. They point out early PR efforts that created fashion awareness with special reference to fashion

expositions. This is of interest with regards to this thesis as exhibitions are still a much used tool within fashion PR today. Although the prime purpose is that of selling products, fashion exhibitions are an important tool in creating brand awareness amongst the industry. In this context Fombrun (1999) examines the potential of the fashion industry in building high profile brands. He analyses how the prestige of a label sustains a pyramid of derivative licenses and how those licenses generate wealth and reputation for the respective designer or the fashion house. He further investigates how the reputation of a label can be tarnished and how tarnished reputation could be restored with the help of the PR industry. Though Fombrun does not take this finding any further the research for this thesis very much confirms his notion, indeed it has found that within fashion a tarnished reputation is entirely curable by PR efforts as can be seen in the case of Kate Moss has shown (see section 2.9 of this chapter).

PR appears to be a prime thought for the fashion industry and both PR and marketing efforts are closely integrated in the overall process of designing a collection. Most fashion houses have PR representation either in-house or agency, often both. Tungate (2005) notes that it is via carefully constructed PR efforts that many fashion brands have become household names and identifies it as one of the main forces for brand recognition. The actual relationship between fashion journalism and PR remains undiscussed, however fashion journalist Roger Tredre, states that "...though the greatest products in the world can be produced, the most important thing is to convince the press and maintain good quality press relations." (Mori, 2005)

McRobbie (1998) addresses the crucial connection between fashion designers and the fashion media outlining the various roles within the fashion industry. She pinpoints towards the power fashion PR holds over both fashion design and the fashion press. She notes the diversity of jobs within the fashion and fashion media industries, pointing out that the tendency of changing from one category to another is commonplace. This has been a recurrent finding during the course of this research. The fashion industry is exclusive and heavily depends on contacts, thus the change of direction within the same field is very common, McRobbie continually stresses that fashion media lacks scholarly attention and work has formed a strong basis for the discussion of this thesis and she is quoted and referred to repeatedly throughout.

## **2.8. Celebrity Endorsement**

Celebrity endorsement is a key ingredient for successful fashion PR. Whilst reviewing the literature it emerged that this particular connection, though not always in a fashion context but in the wider sphere of PR and product promotion, has been looked at extensively by a variety of academics and scholars over the past three decades. Thus for the purpose of this study it seemed crucial to look at their findings in closer detail.

Erdogan, Baker and Tagg (2001) found that the number of celebrity campaigns in the UK has increased markedly. In fact, their findings show that one in five marketing communications (i.e. PR) campaigns in the United Kingdom feature celebrities. While this information is interesting on its own, it is more interesting vis-à-vis the current

discussion. For example, when the newcomer actress Scarlet Johansson wore a Prada gown to the BAFTA awards in March 2004, the campaign featured on the front pages of almost every major newspaper in the UK the following day (as per content analysis, March 2004).

Jackall & Mirota (2000, p.122) observe that: “the construction of so called ‘spokespeople’ illustrates in a paradigmatic way the attempt to shape credibility that crosses social boundaries. Commercial advocates have been using celebrities to borrow the authority of fame, glamour, excitement or acclaimed expertise, or exigencies of fast-moving markets.” Arguably fashion is one such market and Robertson (in PR Week August 2005 issue, pp.32-33) refers to fashion related celebrity endorsement as: “...a well-worn route to coverage with celebrities keen to don products for high-profile events, often leading to a mention in the party pages.”

Interesting in terms of the coherent study are the findings of Kamins et al (1994) who suggest that celebrity endorsers are being used by the PR and advertising industries with the goal of influencing consumers' perceptions and purchase intentions. This growing body of research has established that:

1. Celebrities make advertisements believable;
2. Aid in the recognition of brand names;
3. Enhance message recall;
4. Create a positive attitude towards the brand; and,
5. Create a distinct personality for the endorsed brand

In sum, celebrity endorsements are believed to generate a greater likelihood of customers choosing the endorsed brand and messages delivered by popular celebrities.

However the use of celebrities can have its pitfalls. In fact Bivins (2004, p.171) argues that “In recent years, the mass media has been sliding down a slippery slope in pursuit of the private lives of celebrities. These stories sell newspapers and pump up television ratings, but they do little for public discourse. We tell ourselves that we are serving the public; but the bloodthirstiness and competitiveness with which we pursue our quarries are evidence enough that we are in search of nothing more noble than headlines”. Although as discussed earlier in this chapter the risk of tarnishing reputations through misbehaving celebrities appears low in the fashion context, yet Bivin’s comment is interesting with regards to this study as the ‘search of headlines’ is one of the key driving forces of the fashion PR



industry. Certainly within the fashion celebrity connection the emphasis is on being talked about regardless in what context as long as any photographic coverage includes product placement. Arguably this would be different in most other sectors, indeed some researchers have found that negative information about a celebrity endorser attaches not only to the celebrity but to any product endorsed by that celebrity (Klebba and Unger, 1982; Till and Shimp, 1998). Over time, they argue an overexposed celebrity ceases to be distinctive, and can cause consumers to disregard the message in the endorsement (Cooper, 1984; Tripp, Jensen, and Carlson, 1994). However this thesis has found that the fashion PR industry has a great interest in keeping celebrities liked by the fashion press and therefore the public and thus maintains their (high) profiles whilst also nurturing newcomers. Victoria and David Beckham both of considerable worth in terms of fashion PR value are a good example for that. Following scandals surrounding their marriage in 2004/5 with critics predicting an imminent breakup coverage shortly after suggests that the Beckhams are still as valuable as ever and are holding an almost iconic fashion status. The same can be said for UK fashion model Kate Moss whose public image should have been in danger after her public arrest for cocaine abuse in 2005, yet she came out of this scandal perhaps even more popular and remains a permanent fixture within the fashion pages. Thus it seems safe to say that with fashion arguably being a 'safe product', the risk of using celebrity spokespeople seems minimal.

Marshall (2004) expands on this focus and notes that the meaning of the public individual is largely a conceptualisation of the phenomenon of celebrity in connection with power. Looking at TV and cinema personalities in connection with popular culture, fashion is only mentioned in passing. However Turner (2004) understands and examines celebrity as a manufactured commodity in connection with the media industries. His observation that “good publicists are invisible and good promotional strategies end up on the front pages” (p.56) is very much in line with the research aims of this study. He supports the notion of the lack of investigative journalism in the consumer/lifestyle/fashion context and argues that “newspaper coverage can be achieved in different ways but they must not puncture the illusion upon which the whole game depends: that ‘the news’ is the product of independent journalism”.

The bi-annual marathon of designer catwalk shows, London Fashion Week, which forms part of a five week program of designers introducing their respective summer or winter collections, is a PR extravaganza in its own right. Celebrities are an essential part in the PR efforts revolving around maximising Fashion Week media coverage with front row seats allocated to Hollywood actresses and fashion editors alike. In this regard Robertson describes the fashion press as “a quick-moving and inevitably bitchy world in which PR officers and journalists bid to outdo each other with comment on who is not just up with trends, but ahead of them.” (Robertson, 2005 p.32) Fashion PR consultant Lindley Baptiste, agrees that: “The most important thing about dealing with the fashion press is being able to talk their language. Their *raison d’être* are top-end celebrities and power

brands – everything is ‘of the moment’.” (Baptiste in Robertson, 2005, p.32). The run up to Fashion Week is equally important for fashion PR officers and Sairey Stemp of Elle Magazine describes this period as “...critical for fashion PR executives as journalists all want to know which designers will be exhibiting (and where) far in advance so they can plan how to access as many events as possible.” Adam Rutherford (in Roberts 2005, p. 32) states that third-party endorsement is used to smooth a path into coverage, and so is using a celebrity photographer, stylist or hairdresser for a shoot.

A set of theoretical models has been constructed by various researchers in order to explain the celebrity endorsement phenomenon. These constructs include the Source Attractiveness Model, proposed by McGuire (1968), the Product Match-Up Hypothesis proposed by Kahle and Homer (1985) and Kamins (1989, 1990), and the Meaning Transfer Model by McCracken (1980). The Source Credibility Model asserts that the perceived level of expertise and trustworthiness of an endorser is the reason for an endorser’s effectiveness (Erdogan, Baker & Tagg, 2001, p. 39). Kelman (1961) found that information if it derives from a credible source (e.g., celebrity) can influence beliefs, opinions, attitudes, and/or behavior. He calls this process internalisation, which he claims occurs when receivers accept a source influence in terms of their personal attitude and value structures. The Source Attractiveness Model asserts that a message’s effectiveness depending on how similar, familiar and liked an endorser is by the target market (McGuire, 1968). Erdogan, Baker and Tagg (2001) define similarly as an assumed resemblance between the source of the message (the celebrity) and the receiver. Familiarity, they note, is knowledge of the source via repeated exposure.

Likeability is regarded as affection of a sort based on the celebrity's appearance and behaviour. The Product Match-Up Hypothesis is conceptually beyond the two constructs above, noting instead that the message conveyed by the celebrity's image needs to be matching with the characteristics of the promoted product to ensure effectiveness (Forkan, 1980; Kahle and Homer, 1985; Kamins, 1989, 1990). Erdogan, Baker and Tagg (2001) suggest that this may be the reason for the use of celebrities such as Madonna, Cindy Crawford, Isabella Rosselini, and so on to endorse all sorts of fashion products.

In terms of fashion PR, McCracken's (1989) notion of 'meaning transfer' seems worth noting. He proposes that celebrity endorsements are special examples of a general process in which there is a conventional path for the movement of cultural meaning between members of society. Outlined below are the three stages of meaning transfer as identified by Erdogan et al (2001):

- Formation of the celebrity image (often virtually in place before the person is chosen as an endorser for a particular product).
- Transfer of meaning from the celebrity to the product.
- Transfer from product to consumer

McCracken's model may initially appear to be a theory only, but it has been proven to have effect in reality. Walker et al (1991a and b) demonstrated that symbolic meanings which have been attached to celebrities such as Cher, Madonna and Christie Brinkley,

transfer to the brands they endorse. The research for this thesis endorses their findings establishing Kate Moss, Kylie Minogue, Scarlett Johansson, Sienna Miller and Gwyneth Paltrow as celebrities closely associated with fashion.

Till and Busler (2001) investigated the Match-Up Hypothesis further and they were particularly interested in the area of physical attractiveness which seems a vital aspect in context with fashion PR. They noted that the hypothesis, as denoted by Kamins (1990) suggested that endorsers would be more effective if there were a fit between endorser and product. Most of the empirical research on the match-up hypothesis concerned assessments of the physical attractiveness of the celebrity endorser. “The conceptual argument is that attractive celebrities are more effective endorsers for products which are used to enhance one’s attractiveness. Though they argue that empirical support for this attractiveness match-up theory has been elusive” (2001, p.1). They did note, however, that “casual observation suggests that marketing and advertising practitioners believe that using physically attractive spokespeople is effective” (Till and Busler, 2001, p. 1). This fact has also been confirmed during the course of research for this study.

The use of fashion models is a good example for the match-up hypothesis. Unlike the ‘muses’ of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century who inspired fashion designers to their creations and became ‘house mannequins’, a growing trend amongst designers and fashion houses today is to choose models according to their products (i.e. after the item has been designed). The chosen model then becomes the face to be associated with the fashion

house or brand. The rise of the supermodel in the early 1990s with women such as Claudia Schiffer, Naomi Campbell and Cindy Crawford rising to fame and turning into celebrities themselves, is a phenomenon solely made possible by the symbioses of fashion and the media. The PR industry had recognised the value of the new trend of putting a face to a brand as well as the publics' yearn for glamour and thus the supermodels became the story.

The increasing use of celebrity endorsers, though, has resulted in yet another trend, that of using a celebrity as endorsers for multiple products. Kate Moss and Scarlett Johansson are only two of the many celebrities that were detected during the course of this research to endorse more than one fashion product. Tripp et al. (1994) and later Kahle & Riley (2004) investigated the effects of multiple product endorsements on consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions and found that the number of products a celebrity endorses negatively influences consumers' perceptions of endorser credibility and likeability, as well as attitude towards the endorsed brand. This thesis however found no evidence that this affects the PR industry in their efforts of maintaining celebrities for the promotion of fashion products.

## **2.9. Summary**

Throughout the literature review it emerged that fashion does not feature highly within any PR or journalistic sources. Most of the PR literature focuses on corporate and political works, which are areas that are considered altogether more important. The same can be said for the journalistic side with well respected journalists such as Hargreaves, Lloyd or

Davies for example recognising the importance of entertainment and celebrity but despite the economic value of fashion within UK newspapers they do not mention it in their writings. It seems an area unworthy of intellectual consideration yet more and more universities offer courses within fashion promotion and both fashion PR and journalism are popular career choices particularly amongst young women.

On the whole the literature seems to overstep the crucial connection between the fashion PR industry and the fashion media, but looks at PR primarily in the sender receiver (i.e. end consumer) sense for which a variety of studies have been identified. Although fashion is a main line of business within consumer PR and most fashion companies use an agency or in-house communications department, it does seem astonishing that the relation between the two has not been analysed in more detail. This supports one of the original motives for this study and calls for more academic attention in this particular field.

### **3.1. Introduction – Methods of Enquiry**

The theory that fashion PR is both directly and indirectly responsible for UK fashion print media content is built upon a knowledge base that derives primarily from personal experience within the fashion PR industry, which requires for this to be a deductive study. This chapter outlines the deductive approach to the research problem and discusses in detail the three different methods of enquiry applied for this thesis.

The deductive reasoning works from the more general to the more specific, informally this is referred to as a "top-down" approach (Trochim, 2006).

#### **Figure: 1**

##### **Deductive Reasoning – ‘Top –Down Approach’**

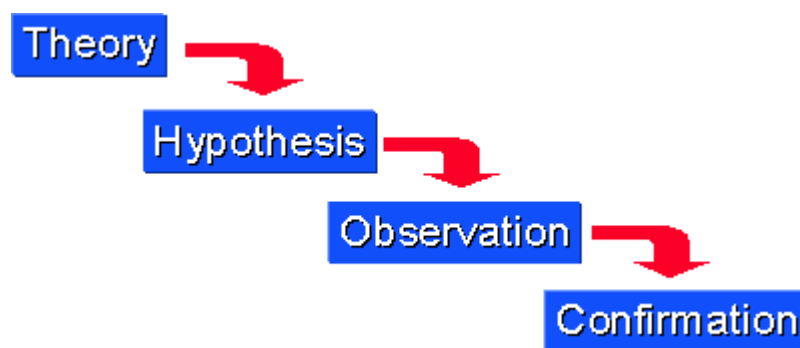


Figure adapted from Trochim (2006)<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/dedind.php> [accessed January 2007]



This study started out with a broad assumption about the relationship between fashion PR and UK print media coverage which during the process of research has been narrowed down into a more specific hypothesis. This hypothesis has been tested through three different research methods: content analysis, semi structured interviews and participant observation. By combining qualitative and quantitative methods this thesis approaches the research problem from a middle position also known as ‘analytic realism’ advocated by Seal (1999). This position allows the researcher to be continually aware of the constructed nature of the research in question yet circumvents the application of constructivism.

As suggested by Creswell (2003) both forms of data were collected (qualitative and quantitative) at the same time during this study and the retrieved information was integrated in the interpretation of the overall results. Applying a middle position as well as converging qualitative and quantitative data have provided a comprehensive analysis of the research problem.

As the central issue of this thesis is the assumption that the UK fashion PR industry is the catalyser of UK newspaper fashion coverage, it is predominantly of an exploratory nature, requiring a subjective position. It argues that PR research is usually based upon theoretical models, which neglect behavioural analysis, thus Grunig and Hunt’s (1984) four models of PR outlined in the literature review can arguably be seen as an example for that.

### **3.2. Content Analysis**

The content analysis approach used in this study follows the guidance provided by Fico, Lacy and Riffe (1998) who advise, “Application of any research method, survey, experiment, content analysis, or the like to analyse a phenomenon can be viewed as consisting of three phases or stages: conceptualisation of the phenomenon, planning or research design of the inquiry, and data collection and analysis” (p. 33).

Berelson (1952, p.74). describes content analysis as “a method primarily associated with quantitative research as a way of obtaining data to measure the frequency and extent, if not the meaning of messages” , Analysing the frequency and amount of fashion coverage within UK newspapers and more specifically, the coverage of particular fashion brands and the frequency and positioning of their placements within the publication (i.e. main news story, feature article, photo-shoot) has been the main aim for this part of the research. A sample of broadsheets, mid market and tabloids newspapers (see Table 1) has been chosen according to the preliminary study discussed in chapter 1.2. Fashion coverage has been monitored, coded and analysed over the time span of six months, during one week of each month starting in January 2004 ending in June 2004.

**Table: 1**

Newspaper Sample
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Daily Telegraph</li><li>• The Times</li><li>• The Guardian</li><li>• The Independent</li><li>• The Express</li><li>• The Financial Times</li><li>• The Daily Mail</li><li>• Daily Mirror</li></ul>

As content analysis is frequently adopted within social science research it has been defined by Berelson (1952 p.74) as: “A research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of manifest content of communications - a research tool which focuses on the actual content and internal features of media and is used to determine the presence of certain words, concepts, themes, phrases, characters, or sentences within texts or sets of texts and to quantify this presence in an objective manner.” Though largely acknowledged as a research method of the electronic age, content analysis was regularly performed in the 1940s but became a more credible and frequently used research method since the mid-1950's, as researchers started to focus on concepts rather than simply words, and on semantic relationships rather than just presence (de Sola Pool, 1959 in Palmquist

[online])<sup>9</sup>. According to Palmquist (2004), “content analysis can indicate pertinent features such as comprehensiveness of coverage or the intentions, biases, prejudices, and oversights of authors, publishers, as well as all other persons responsible for the content of materials” [online].<sup>10</sup>

Due to the fact that it can be applied to examine any piece of writing or occurrence of recorded communication, content analysis is used in a large number of fields, ranging from media studies to literature and rhetoric, ethnography and cultural studies, gender and age issues, sociology and political science, psychology and cognitive science, as well as other fields of inquiry. The following list (adapted from Berelson, 1952) offers more possibilities for the uses of content analysis and has influenced the choice of this method for current study.

- Reveal international differences in communication content
- Detect the existence of propaganda
- Identify the intentions, focus or communication trends of an individual, group or institution
- Describe attitudinal and behavioural responses to communications
- Determine psychological or emotional state of persons or groups

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.colostate.edu/Depts/WritingCenter/references/research/content/page2.htm> [accessed on 24 September 2006]

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.colostate.edu/Depts/WritingCenter/references/research/content/page2.htm> [accessed on 24 September 2006]

As suggested by Berelson (1952), there are two general categories of content analysis, conceptual analysis and relational analysis. For this study conceptual analysis has been chosen, as it establishes the existence and frequency of concepts whereas relational analysis which builds upon conceptual analysis examines the relationships among concepts within a text.

Traditionally, content analysis has most often been thought of in terms of conceptual analysis (Berelson, 1952). In conceptual analysis, a concept is chosen for examination and the number of its occurrences within the text recorded as has been the case for this study. Because terms may be implicit as well as explicit, it is important to clearly define implicit terms before the beginning of the counting process. As with most other research methods, conceptual analysis begins with identifying research questions and choosing one sample or more samples. According to West (2001), “Content analysis almost always involves a convenience sample to some degree. We do the best we can with what we have and, if honest, acknowledge the limitations” (p. 4). Once chosen, the text must be coded into manageable content categories. The process of coding can be seen as one of selective reduction, which is the central idea in content analysis.

For this study, breaking down the contents of the newspaper sample into different categories relating to fashion made it easier to put the information into a manageable coding scheme and thus provided for a more precise form of data analysis (see Appendix 4). For this thesis content analysis has been an exhaustive way of data collection. The sample of eight main British newspapers consisting of the titles listed in Table: 1, provided

the base for this project. Any content even remotely connected to fashion was examined, coded into manageable theme based categories and analysed using a particularly developed coding schedule. The emerging results were used to make inferences about the coverage during the next stage of the research, the semi structured interviews.

Following on from the content analysis and with the data that emerged from it the next step was to determine how much of this coverage was in fact manufactured by fashion PR and how much was genuine fashion journalism. This part involved tracing the actual PR companies and via their offices or websites or in fact their clients' websites seek the publicity material that was created for the purpose of achieving press coverage. The previously mentioned Fashion Monitor (see Chapter 4. Review of the Literature) helped in identifying the PR companies that were representing the relevant companies. Previous contacts in the field also helped to gain access to some of the material. A lengthy process of telephone and email conversations resulted in the compilation of 44 press releases from fashion PR firms & in house departments dating from the time during which the content analysis took place. These were collected and compared to the coverage. Here the snowballing technique' as suggested by Sayer (1994) was adopted whereby individuals already known to the author led to access to further industry insiders.

### **3.3. Interviews**

As this study probes to determine how fashion PR professionals in an increasingly saturated market, manage to gain media attention it was implicit that the results and issues arising from the content analysis were cross referenced through semi structured interviews which formed the first part of the qualitative component of this research. Daymon and Holloway (2002) are of the opinion that qualitative reasoning holds great potential for the study of PR. They claim that it helps researchers to comprehend social processes, the motivations of human beings and the contexts in which they are situated.

For the semi structured interviews a sample of PR professionals, members of the fashion press, fashion stylists, fashion photographers, fashion designers, marketing executives, company directors and other academics, has been chosen and a series of semi structured interviews was conducted. May (2001) notes that this particular interviewing method allowed interviewees to answer more on their own terms as opposed to structured interviews where the questions are totally standardised, but still provide a greater structure for comparability over that of the unstructured/ focused interview.

As suggested by Flick (2002), a special “interview guide” was designed and applied, containing focused as well as open-end questions that aim at the complex knowledge of the interviewees about the topic. The relatively open framework of this interviewing technique allowed for focused, conversational, two-way communication with the chosen sample of interviewees. The purpose of using this method was to obtain substantial qualitative and quantitative information and it proved a very successful and exhaustive method.

The interviews took place in different places which were largely chosen by the interviewees according to their convenience and time schedules. The author was adaptable to their wishes and interviews were often conducted in their offices or locations nearby. However occasionally setting up the interviews in person proved difficult as the unpredictability of the profession often made the participants cancel at the last moment thus in order to keep up with the research timing schedule, interviews were sometimes carried out over the telephone or via email (See Appendix 5).

Though an interviewing framework was designed and prepared prior to carrying out this part of the research, at times additional questions came up in conversation and at other times questions were dropped according to the interviewee. It emerged as a very adjustable and non-intrusive research method which made it possible to 'personalise' each interview.

The interviewees from the PR side all had similar views on most of the questions posed and there was a definite overlap of answers largely underlining the hypothesis of this thesis. However the set of interviewees that included members of the fashion press who did not entirely agree with this theory were able to answer on their own terms, another positive aspect of this form of interview. The semi structured method also made it possible for the author to ask back and achieve further reasoning from the interviewee. Interesting points arose in conversation that had not been accounted for in previous parts of the research and sensitive issues such as manipulation, integrity and spin were more easily discussed than had it been an entirely structured interview.



Notes were taken during the interviews though most information was written down immediately afterwards and the collected data was put into specifically designed coding schedules. The evaluation of the coding schedules was separated into two categories of data, dividing those that mainly agreed with the research hypothesis and those who objected. In order to ease this process the ‘rating technique’ was applied. This proved a useful tool in order to measure and evaluate attitudes towards the correlation between PR and fashion print media coverage more accurately. The six category scale outlined in Table 2. gave an exact indication as to how many interviewees agreed or disagreed with the research question. Some information was out-filtered during the coding process as it seemed to shift the focus from the original outline of the original research question.

**Table: 2**

***Question:***

***Is PR responsible for the large scale of fashion coverage within British newspapers?***

Strongly Agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly	Disagree
18	6				

### **3.4. Choosing Interviewees**

The chosen interviewees were knowledgeable individuals who by virtue of their work, experience and position have an accumulated substantial knowledge about issues concerning the area of research. In order to establish a rounded view it was imperative to

interview individuals from different parts of the fashion and fashion media industries. This however proved at times difficult as potential interviewees were often unavailable or not inclined to participate, hence the previously mentioned ‘snowballing technique’ (Sayer, 1994) was adopted whereby interviewing of individuals already known to the author led to otherwise difficult access to further interviewees. The sample of interviewees is small compared with studies carried out in other fields of PR however due to the relatively closed world of fashion PR this represents a valid sample. It was made up of the following (see list of interviewees in Appendix 2):

### **Interviewee Sample<sup>11</sup>**

7 journalists
6 fashion PR professionals
4 fashion stylists
1 fashion designer
1 fashion photographer
1 fashion event organiser

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<sup>11</sup> It has to be noted that some of the interviewees are experts in more than one field – a phenomenon closely related the fashion and surrounding industries.

### **3.5. Participant Observation**

Anzul, Ely, Garner et al. (1991, p.42), suggest that “...the most essential means of gathering ethnographic data are looking and listening. The stance of participant observer is basic to carrying out naturalistic research. Participant observation covers a broad continuum of kinds and degrees of participating. Classic participant observation [...] always involves the interweaving of looking and listening [...] of watching and asking—and some of that listening and asking may approach or be identical to intensive interviewing”. Therefore, to further enhance the understanding of the fashion PR industry participant observation appeared to represent an appropriate method to include into this project. Regular visits to a well established London fashion PR agency were planned and carried out from May to October 2005, meetings, product launches, events and photo opportunities were attended and an insight into product placement and celebrity endorsement was provided. Field notes have been taken and the collected data was analysed and cross-referenced with the results from the content analysis and the semi structured interviews.

Though the Chicago School of Participant Observation<sup>12</sup> [online] states that this research method has ‘quite a distinct history from that of the positivist approach to research,’ and claims that positivist researchers employing questionnaires and surveys assume that they already know what is important whereas participant observation makes no firm assumptions about what is important, in this case however the author’s prior experience within the field had already created a firm hypothesis. Therefore ideas were not only developed from observations during the research which calls for an inductive study, they were to a certain extent tested, which confirms the deductive approach.

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<sup>12</sup> [http://uk.geocities.com/balihar\\_sanghera/qrpmparticipantobservation.html](http://uk.geocities.com/balihar_sanghera/qrpmparticipantobservation.html) [accessed on 14th May 2006]

The Chicago School of Participant Observation indicates four roles of field research: (Qualitative Research Methods: Participant Observation, n.d. – online)<sup>13</sup>

1. *Complete participant* in which the researcher employing this role attempts to engage fully in the activities of the group or organisation under investigation. Their role is also covert (hidden) for their intentions are not made explicit. Among its advantages it is agreed to produce more accurate information and an understanding not available by other means ‘
2. *Participant as observer* in which the researcher adopts an open role, and makes their presence and intentions known to the group or organisation.
3. *Observer as participant* in which the researcher moves away from the idea of participation. This usually involves one-visit interviews, and calls for relatively more formal observation (e.g., ownership and structure of a firm, rather than its internal practices and norms) than either informal observation or participation. Here, there is a possibility of misunderstanding as it is more of an encounter between strangers that does not utilise the strengths of time in the field, so unable to understand the rules, roles and relationships.
4. *Complete observer*: the researcher is uninvolved and detached, and merely, passively records behaviour at a distance.

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<sup>13</sup> [http://uk.geocities.com/balihar\\_sanghera/qrpmparticipantobservation.html](http://uk.geocities.com/balihar_sanghera/qrpmparticipantobservation.html) [accessed 14th May 2006]

During this part of the research a cross between ‘Participant as Observer’ and ‘Observer as Participant’ was adopted which was largely due to time constraints. The agency only allowed a certain number of visits with limited time slots due to the small size of the organisation. The company’s director was concerned that her employees may feel intimidated or distracted if an outsider was to spend too much time within the agency. Therefore some fundamental constraints existed as to the efficacy of the approach from the outset.

According to Bradburd (2006), “Assumptions about participant observation, fieldwork, and the ethnographic encounter certainly impact on an ethnographer's perception of the field situation, including its ease or difficulty and, perhaps, its success or failure; [however], the greatest difficulties arise from the inevitable discomforts of establishing personal relationships with people who are also objects of study” (p. 264). Fortunately, to help overcome this constraint, it was made public knowledge that the author was to come in and observe for the purpose of academic study. The author and the management felt more comfortable with this approach than had I disguised myself as a member of staff or a student on work experience. Contrary to the management’s original reservation towards the reaction of staff to the participant observation it occurred that the employees were comfortable with the author’s presence in their workplace. They agreed to answer questions and gave access to meetings and publicity material.

One of the main advantages of this research method has been its flexibility. The fieldwork though brief has been a continual process of reflection and alteration of the focus of observations in accordance with analytic developments, however the data logging process has proved a time-consuming process. A special coding schedule was designed and the field notes were evaluated within the scheme and further cross-referenced with the findings that emerged from the other parts of the research (see Appendix).

### **3.6. Access & Ethical Issues**

The qualitative part of the research for this project brought with it some ethical issues. Prior to each interview the author made the interviewees aware of the aims of this research and offered for them to keep anonymous if they preferred. It was also pointed out that all information would be handled with strict confidentiality and whenever sensitive issues arose the author clarified as to whether those could be mentioned within the thesis and under which constraints. Most interviewees were happy to be named within the publication of this thesis however the agency allowing the participant observation part asked to remain anonymous. This they argued was out of loyalty towards their clients. Consequently the agency within which the participant observation took place is referred to as ‘the agency’ and those interviewees not wishing to disclose their identity are referred to as ‘interviewee’ or ‘anonymous’.

As mentioned previously in this chapter access to certain people was difficult which called for the application of the snowballing technique as suggested by Sayer (1994). The

majority of the interviewees were known to the author before setting up the interviews, however some members of the fashion press in particular who were hesitant in the beginning agreed to be interviewed after recommendation of other interviewees.

### **3.7. Summary**

In conclusion the use of the three different research methods has been a successful and effective way of data collection. Combining qualitative and quantitative methods which complemented each other well meant a detailed insight into a largely un-researched area. It provided theoretical as well as practical data, with the content analysis to a large extent forming the research basis. The data collected during this part not only gave the author a good notion of the extent of fashion coverage and its actual content within UK newspapers, it also ultimately lead to the final design of the interview questions and their structure. It was on the base of the content analysis that semi-structured interviews were chosen as a path of enquiry. The chosen interviewees were a non bias selection of people with unique insider knowledge of the various different parts of the research area. Using the snowballing technique meant that access to a number of experts which would have otherwise proved difficult was possible. The information gathered throughout the interview phase of this study could then in parts be explored first hand by the author through the participant observation. This very effective research method was in many ways a confirmation of previous assumptions. As the author was able to immerse herself in the daily dealings of a PR agency environment whilst having access to PR experts at the same time, participant observation presented the perfect method to round off the research.

## **Part III – Context**



## **Chapter 4: The UK Fashion Media**

### **4.1. Introduction**

In order to understand the research parameters and its context with the journalistic side, this chapter provides an overview of the fashion media in the UK. It gives an insight of the UK newspaper market by providing circulation figures at the time of writing (2004) as well as more recent ones (2008) and discusses the fundamental differences between tabloids and broadsheets as well as their specific orientation towards fashion coverage. A brief overview of the UK fashion magazine industry is also provided. Section 4.3. outlines fashion coverage within UK newspapers and its historical origins, whilst section 4.4. explores the fundamental differences between fashion journalism and traditional news journalism. Section 4.5. looks at particularities within the fashion media, pointing out its close-knit community due to small fashion departments and a strong tendency of people doing more than one job, as well as its dependence on fabricated information provided by the PR industry.

### **4.2. The UK Newspaper & Magazine Market**

This section looks at the UK newspaper market in closer detail and pays particular attention to its fashion segment. The UK differentiates between ‘broadsheets’ and ‘tabloids’. On the whole broadsheets are seen as qualitative more viable and are called by that name due to its format (15 by 24 inches), they are also referred to as elite newspapers (Janssen, 2006) whereas tabloids are not only smaller in size (12 by 16 inches) they are made to appeal to a

mass audience, are seen as less serious with an emphasis on photographs and a concise and often sensational style (Collins, 2004). For this research both broadsheets and tabloids have been examined. Outlined over the next few pages are recent circulation figures (February 2008) for the Sunday and daily editions as well as the figures of June 2004 the time when the content analysis took place.

**Table: 3**

**Daily Newspaper Circulation: June 2004**

Title	June 2004	June 2003	% change	Jan-June 2004	Jan-June 2003	% change
Sun	3,348,220	3,508,950	-4.58	3,365,844	3,525,993	-4.54
Daily Mirror	1,833,980	1,948,870	-5.90	1,883,274	1,989,174	-5.32
Daily Star	890,771	869,795	2.41	898,692	851,781	5.51
Daily Record	490,925	503,338	-2.47	495,909	511,564	-3.06
Daily Mail	2,308,982	2,305,596	0.15	2,322,970	2,350,541	-1.17
Daily Express	898,313	889,014	1.05	892,388	904,325	-1.10
Daily Telegraph	871,283	900,646	-3.26	878,030	911,584	-3.68
Times	621,325	594,464	4.52	616,706	616,308	0.06
FT	401,676	431,823	-6.98	414,377	434,907	-4.72
Guardian	361,682	371,632	-2.63	358,625	386,585	-7.23
Independent	230,673	182,668	26.28	224,499	184,016	22.00

Source: Audit Bureau of Circulations (all figures exclude bulk sales)

Available from <http://media.guardian.co.uk/presspublishing/tables/0,,1259482,00.html>

**Table: 4**

**National Sunday Newspaper Circulation: June 2004**

Title	Jun 2004	Jun 2003	% change	Jan-Jun 2004	Jan-Jun 2003	% change
News World of	3,735,739	3,820,908	-2.23	3,840,584	3,875,857	-0.91
Sunday Mirror	1,524,560	1,632,991	-6.64	1,594,143	1,643,936	-3.03
Sunday People	1,004,480	1,100,315	-8.71	1,029,364	1,120,222	-8.11
Sunday Mail	583,659	612,241	-4.67	596,037	619,644	-3.81
Star Sunday on	500,461	476,570	5.01	515,200	472,228	9.10
Mail Sunday on	2,197,563	2,200,530	-0.13	2,269,271	2,278,959	-0.43
Sunday Express	930,637	872,540	6.66	889,973	881,556	0.95
Sunday Times	1,330,658	1,357,863	-2.00	1,347,665	1,369,130	-1.57
Sunday Telegraph	668,147	689,281	-3.07	672,554	710,581	-5.35
Observer	430,112	416,570	3.25	425,317	430,546	-1.21
Indep. Sunday on	175,874	177,719	-1.04	174,573	182,646	-4.42
The Business	23,501	72,847	-67.74	61,144	75,524	-19.04

Source: Audit Bureau of Circulations (all figures exclude bulk sales)

Available from <http://media.guardian.co.uk/presspublishing/tables/0,,1259482,00.html>

**Table: 5****Daily Newspaper Circulation: February 2008**

	February 2008	February 2007	% change	January 2008	February 2008	September 2007 February 2008	% - change on last year
The Sun	3,077,060	3,072,392	0.15	3,209,776	3,077,060	3,114,496	-0.13
The Daily Mirror	1,500,543	1,564,082	-4.06	1,512,559	1,500,543	1,525,011	-3.79
Daily Star	723,905	779,023	-7.08	722,969	723,905	753,504	-2.79
Daily Record	394,189	412,844	-4.52	393,788	392,104	397,528	-4.50
The Daily Mail	2,294,880	2,339,733	-1.92	2,313,908	2,189,465	2,329,396	-0.68
Daily Express	736,634	761,637	-3.28	752,699	736,634	769,576	-1.73
The Daily Telegraph	866,693	896,476	-3.32	890,086	766,935	881,071	-2.26
The Times	613,068	642,711	-4.61	633,718	564,350	633,332	-3.65
Financial Times	448,342	445,276	0.69	447,114	413,930	445,825	1.90
The Guardian	355,634	364,491	-2.43	378,394	340,496	362,280	-4.29
The Independent	252,435	264,182	-4.45	250,641	210,943	242,679	-5.59

Source: Audit Bureau of Circulations (all figures exclude bulk sales)

Available from <http://media.guardian.co.uk/presspublishing/tables/0,,1259482,00.html>

**Table: 6****National Sunday Newspaper Circulation - February 2008**

	February 2008	February 2007	% change	January 2008	February 2008 (without bulks)	September 2007- February 2008	% change on last year
News of the World	3,281,287	3,371,369	-2.67	3,264,676	3,281,287	3,306,354	-3.64
Sunday Mirror	1,348,395	1,374,786	-1.92	1,366,922	1,348,395	1,373,205	-0.78
The People	653,909	746,083	-12.35	669,362	653,909	685,118	-11.88
Sunday Mail	484,331	508,594	-4.77	487,975	483,571	495,277	-3.56
Daily Star Sunday	366,523	384,060	-4.57	382,288	366,523	412,616	8.41
Mail on Sunday	2,203,642	2,263,980	-2.67	2,330,366	2,087,550	2,300,130	-1.26
Sunday Express	676,165	816,351	-17.17	704,436	676,165	698,564	-12.04
Sunday Times	1,206,247	1,245,483	-3.15	1,231,374	1,185,420	1,220,277	-4.60
Sunday Telegraph	633,193	667,692	-5.17	633,639	566,734	635,968	-3.92
The Observer	464,005	442,137	4.95	444,951	435,240	459,840	1.34
Independent on Sunday	228,012	239,585	-4.83	236,500	188,200	213,505	

Source: Audit Bureau of Circulations (figures include bulks unless otherwise stated)

Available from <http://media.guardian.co.uk/presspublishing/tables/0,,1259482,00.html>

This research through content analysis and interviews confirmed that all UK newspapers have a fashion department which is largely reliant on freelance staff. The mid market titles and primarily the Daily Mail are the leaders in terms of quantity of fashion coverage, whereas the broadsheets pride themselves with more up-market fashion reporting. They employ established fashion journalists who enjoy celebrity status by the PR industry (see participant observation & interview notes) such as Hilary Alexander (Daily Telegraph), Susannah Frankel (Independent) and Lisa Armstrong (Times) to mention a few. The Times and the Daily Mail have a long history with fashion coverage starting even before WWI which is discussed in section 4.2. of this chapter.

Though this study focuses primarily on fashion coverage within UK newspapers, it is important in the wider context to take fashion magazine content into consideration. The UK magazine market has changed significantly since the change of the millennium, especially with the proliferation of celebrity titles, such as Heat, Look and Grazia which are affording a new opportunity for fashion companies to promote their products. As they require speedy information due to their much shorter lead times they have opened up a whole new potential for fashion PR.

- **Magazines**

According to Mintel (2004)<sup>14</sup> the magazine industry was in fear of collapse under the threat of new media in the late 1990s. However re-inventions, new launches and innovations such as small sized magazines have seen a strong performance during this decade. Mintel (2004) further claims that in 2004, an estimated 527 million women's magazines featuring fashion content were sold, which is a 15% increase from the year 2000. The percentage split between weekly and monthly titles has, however, shifted – from 84:16% to 86:14%. This development is largely seen as a result of new weekly titles, 90% of which are celebrity titles whose circulations have grown 91% between 2000 and 2004 to account for 35% of the women's weekly magazine market. In terms of retail sales, celebrity titles accounted for 52% in 2004 compared to 38% in 2000. The success of newer titles such as Glamour and InStyle has been influential in the monthly magazine market, as has the launch of smaller size formats by existing magazines (i.e., *Cosmopolitan* and *Marie Claire*) (Mintel 2004).

The interviewees of this research agree with Mintel's (2004) claim that Vogue, Elle and Tatler remain the UK's most influential fashion magazines and though their high advertising content of exclusive fashion houses/brands dictates much of the category of fashion coverage, this is arguably what their readers expect and look for (interview notes 2005, 2006, 2007).

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[http://academic.mintel.com/sinatra/oxygen\\_academic/my\\_reports/display/id=220284&anchor=atom/display/id=114740](http://academic.mintel.com/sinatra/oxygen_academic/my_reports/display/id=220284&anchor=atom/display/id=114740) [accessed on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2005]



#### **4.3. Fashion Coverage within UK Newspapers and Supplements**

Fashion coverage within UK newspapers in its modern sense has been in existence since the 1940s and was of some political importance as they were the first pages within newspapers written for women by women (Nick Davies, interview April 2008). Some preliminary research using the archives of the Collindale newspaper library was carried out prior to this thesis and confirmed the historical existence of fashion coverage within UK newspapers. Looking at random editions of The Daily Mail and The Times from 1940 onwards it transpired that fashion columns appeared in those publications although in a much lesser quantity and different format. The content was largely aiming at the middle class female (The Daily Mail) and their husbands (The Times). Written in a factual style they were largely informing about new fashions emerging from ‘fashion capitals’ such as Paris and Milan whilst also offering advice as to what to wear for certain occasions. For example one of the early fashion pages within the Daily Mail advises on how to dress appropriately for a tea party. Coverage was at times supported by sketches photography was not used until the 1960s.

Fashion Supplements such as the ‘Daily Mail Weekend’ first appeared in the early 1990s. These magazine style publications that come free with the actual newspaper opened up a whole new spectrum in terms of fashion coverage with considerable numbers of pages and column inches ‘reserved’ for fashion. Fashion supplements are of vital importance to the publishers as they carry large economical importance with 60% of pages reserved for large fashion advertisers.

#### **4.4. Fashion Journalism in the UK**

McRobbie (1998) suggests that, “By providing a display window for United Kingdom fashion design, the fashion media functions as a pillar of support for the industry. Had it not been for the appearance of *The Face* magazine in 1980 and *i-D* in the same year, British *Elle* magazine in 1985, and the British edition of *Marie Claire* in 1988, the boom in United Kingdom designer fashion through the 1980s and into the 1990s could hardly have happened” (p. 151). These magazines though, did not provide this support in an unconditional, unmediated or uncomplicated fashion. For instance, this author emphasises that, “The fashion media ‘represents’ fashion and in so doing adds its own gloss, its own frame of meaning to the fashion items which serve as its raw material” (McRobbie, 1998 p. 151).

This research has identified fashion journalism as a unique and almost independent arm of journalism, one that depends heavily on circulation figures but most of all on advertising revenue. This last point is vital in terms of content and thus supports the theory that it is in fact fashion PR and therefore ultimately the fashion designers/houses that largely control fashion journalism. In this regard McRobbie (1998, p.151) argues: “The fashion media finds itself more closely linked with the fashion industry than would be the case in other journalistic fields. The low status of fashion writing within the hierarchical field of print journalism pushes those who work in fashion closer together. The writers, photographers, fashion assistants and contributing editors share the same ‘fashion world’ as the designers, the company directors, the press officers and publicity personnel”.

Linda Grant (The Guardian, 15 April 1997, p.8) argues that there is a certain element of uncertainty involved, as well as an underlying perception that these industry professionals are not taken seriously by other practitioners. She explains that “This is a narrow, even closed, world which perceives itself to be trivialised and associated with a kind of stupidity” (Grant, The Guardian, 15 April 1997, p.8). In the same way, following the murder of Gianni Versace, yet another journalist reported in The Guardian: “Why all the bother, skeptics ask, over a preening victim of fashion, who belongs to the fashion press, not to Fleet Street?” (Glancey, The Guardian, 15. April 1997, p.19).

As a result, fashion journalism does not have the security and confidence of other media worlds. Tunstall (1971) maintains that because specialist fields in journalism associated with consumer-based activities are advertising-revenue driven, they nevertheless retain an intimate relationship with the industry which manufactures and promotes the product, since this is both the source of ‘news’ and of revenue.

Because of its inextricable relationship to its feminine status, fashion remains peculiar in this regard. According to McRobbie, “It has a presence in both the women’s magazine market and in the daily press. Where the readership for the women’s magazines can be assumed to be interested in fashion, there is less of an emphasis on fashion having to prove itself; however, in the daily press, where the staff journalists are predominantly male, even in the context of appearing within the confines of the ‘women’s page’, fashion is more uncertain of its status” (p 151). In many cases, this relationship between femininity and fashion results in “. . . a shrill, often overblown, language so that the reader is reminded

once too often of the creative genius of John Galliano or Vivienne Westwood, triggering a counter-reaction exactly like that expressed in the wake of Versace's death in the Daily Telegraph, where a headline ran 'Was Versace Really A Genius?' and the journalist added, 'Nothing wrong with being vulgar. Versace had a very good idea it's just that it seems odd to treat it as high art'" (Johnson 1997 p.21).

#### **4.5. Particularities in the Fashion Media**

According to McRobbie (1998) and Tungate (2005), the majority of the jobs available in the fashion media today are freelance in nature. This research has found that fashion departments within UK newspapers are small which keeps the costs low and in the same way enforces a close knit community. This is similar within fashion magazines where people often also do more than one job. The fashion editor for example may also be the stylist. Arguably the vast competitive nature of the industry has created new forms of social relations in the workplace. It was confirmed during this research that there are many crossovers within the fashion media and that contacts are the key to the profession.

The journalists interviewed during the course of this study all worked for more than one publication. Some write on a freelance basis and are represented by agencies, whereas others are official contributing editors within magazines and newspapers. It is not uncommon for fashion journalists to switch career paths and work in other sectors of the fashion industry, mostly however they change sides and become fashion PR consultants using their well established contacts. Fashion journalist Alisa Marks for example one of

the interviewees for this thesis also worked as a stylist when she was employed at Vogue. She became a PR consultant before moving on to UK fashion label French Connection where she was made head of design. The same applies to another interviewee, Janine du Plessis, who was a well known fashion journalist before starting her own PR agency in the early 1990s.

Fashion is not the only field of journalism to have so many ill-defined jobs and such high degrees of job mobility. This is a mark of the creative/lifestyle sector of the media as a whole, as Negus (1992) has argued, the creative ethos produces occupational fluidity unheard of elsewhere. Further, although several editors or journalists may have started out with ambitions to be a designer (Glenda Bailey, editor of British Marie Claire from 1988-95, studied fashion design before moving into journalism) most of the journalists have simply combined an interest in fashion and style with writing and reporting.

McRobbie (1998) argues that each separate magazine, newspaper or television programme has its own particular 'house style', its own image of itself and of its audience or readership. "Different media favour different kinds of fashion. We therefore need to tackle a further set of relations between actual, rather than imagined, readers and consumers and their fashion preferences (fantasy or otherwise) in order to chart the connection between editorial policy and the choice of clothes featured on the pages" (McRobbie, 1998 p. 161). This is another important point with regards to this study as the author argues that this mediation is largely if not entirely achieved through fashion PR.

#### **4.6. Summary**

Overall this chapter has provided an overview of the key characteristics of the fashion media in the UK, whilst pointing out the unique position fashion holds within it. As the active research focuses on newspapers in particular, special attention was paid to this medium. Chapter 4. presents a fundamental knowledge base for this particular line of enquiry as in order to research fashion PR it was important to establish and understand the perimeters in which it plays its active role. The significant difference between fashion journalism and traditional news journalism is of key importance. Fashion journalists on UK newspapers work in a different professional structure and are independent of the news desk. Fashion departments are small and their function is more of a commercial nature which largely depends on pleasing advertisers. They have to rely on industry contacts in order to provide timely copy and thus it seems common practice to feed of packaged information provided by the fashion industry itself via their respective PR departments or agencies. The economical aspect of fashion coverage within in UK newspapers is vast and a recurrent issue within this thesis.

## **Chapter 5: Fashion and Fashion PR in the UK**

### **5.1. Introduction**

This chapter takes a close look at the UK fashion and PR industries. First an overview and brief historical perspective of the UK fashion industry itself is provided, followed by an outline of the fashion PR industry. As this particular area of PR is very loosely regulated precise data in terms of market size was difficult to obtain, thus the suggested figures result from interview notes for this thesis. However there is information on the general UK PR market and its size provided in section 5.3. This is followed by a historical perspective of both the PR and fashion PR industries. The history of PR is chronicled within the literature this however is not the case for fashion PR and most of the information here within the author has drawn by looking at various fashion houses and their use of publicity over the decades.

### **5.2. An Overview of the UK Fashion Industry**

According to the Clothing and Footwear Industry Marketing Review (2005), the second half of the 20th century has seen much of the manufacturing side of the UK fashion and clothing industry move overseas. Many factors have contributed to this move, including:

- the low cost of manufacturing in developing countries;
- increasing globalisation of companies;
- the growing importance of branding and marketing.

Specifically, there has been a rise in the importance and speed of design, marketing and distribution. At the time of writing the UK clothing and footwear market was worth £44bn at retail selling prices in 2004. Whereas the 1980s and 1990s saw a decline in the proportion of disposable income spent on clothing, the market has grown strongly in the early 2000s, exceeding the overall increase in consumer expenditure (Key Note, 2005)<sup>15</sup>.

The reasons for this recovery in spending include:

- the rising proportion of women who work full time and need wardrobes for both work and leisure
- the trend towards 'dressing down' at work, which has paradoxically made people spend more on casual garments than they would need to spend on conventional formal clothing for the workplace
- a growing desire to wear designer brands instead of chain stores' own labels.

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<sup>15</sup> The Clothing and Footwear Marketing Review can be accessed online via <http://www.keynote.co.uk/kn2k1/CnIsapi.dll?nuni=38980&usr=10122srv=02&alias=kn2k1&uni=1240224085&fld=K&noLog=1&frompage=DynAZ&collapseLevel=0&key=9787>



The review further states that growth continued in spite of declining prices. Between 2000 and 2004, average prices across the clothing and footwear market fell by an estimated 11.5%, and prices for some items of women's wear (the most competitive market segment) fell by almost 20%. which is essentially the result of globalised sourcing..

The UK has had high import ratios in both clothing and footwear for many years, and imports account for over 95% of the total market by the end of 2005.

The best opportunities for British manufacturers lie in high-quality or technical clothing and footwear, and exports of these items are still valuable to the economy. Total UK exports of clothing and footwear came to £3.11bn in 2004, although imports were £13.13bn, resulting in a trade deficit of £10.02bn. However, many of the imported goods bear British labels and are manufactured overseas simply for cost reasons. For example, Marks & Spencer used to have a policy of sourcing mainly from domestic factories, but retail competition has forced it to source more products from abroad. The Review's prognoses for the immediate future is that the market is likely to continue to polarise between discount retailers and outlets specialising in premium-priced designer clothing, putting further pressure on mid-market retailers such as Marks & Spencer. However, the greatest threat to established clothing retailers will come from the grocery superstores, which are taking an increasing share of clothing sales and are planning to open chains of non-food stores selling clothing.

The clothing industry is particularly important in terms of its widespread location and its high female employment - 70% of its employees are women. It also makes a significant contribution to ethnic minority and inner city employment (British Fashion Council Report, 2008). Hines and Bruce (2007) note that globally, the clothing and textiles market is estimated to be worth US\$ 350 billion, it is a major employer with main centres such as Paris, London and Milan within Europe, New York in the US as well as Dubai, Bombay, and Tokyo and in 2004 represented seven percent of total world exports.

Charlie Porter (in Mostyn, 2008 p.4), claims that the UK fashion industry remains largely unsupported by the UK government and underappreciated by the UK public. According to this analyst, "London designers are seen as remote and untouchable, and it's not necessarily their fault. Because London lacks big fashion houses on the continental model, the public has little awareness of what London fashion is." The decline of British manufacturing industry aggravates the problem. "Other countries have production infrastructures that embrace each new generation of talent. In London, designers are working in a vacuum. When Britain lost its factories, it also lost its ability to fully support new design." (Porter in Mostyn, 2008 p.4) Likewise, UK government support of the UK fashion industry remains sparse.

In January 2008, a study of the UK designer fashion sector commissioned by the Department of Trade & Industry (DTI) and the British Fashion Council (BFC) reported that, since 1997, the British Government had given a total of £87.8 million to the textile and clothing industries; the DTI website reveals that only £1 million of that went to the designer fashion sector, though (Mostyn, 2008).

The ever-growing pool of fashion designer talent is being forced to show their wares overseas, dilute their imagination for a High-Street chain, or even allow a global conglomerate to acquire them. According to this industry analyst, “It seems that whatever novel, headline-grabbing, ideas will materialise from a small British-trained designer, the big brands will always win – be it a sponsor or Louis Vuitton Moet Hennessy (LVMH)” (Mostyn, 2008 p.4). As Porter advises, “The international fashion industry knows it can go to Britain and tap into its skills without having to support London fashion itself” (quoted in Mostyn, 2008 p.5). “That is what keeps the majority of international buyers away from London Fashion Week (LFW) – making almost untenable the five-day schedule of 50 shows and another 50 off-schedule. And the British public doesn’t care either, because it’s busy lusting after a more accessible international label such as D&G or Armani”.

Mostyn (2008) further notes that even with an understanding of production, marketing and business acumen, if a designer refuses to compromise his creative vision (such as Hussein Chalayan who went into liquidation in 2000 after being named British designer of the year) additional difficulty will arise from maintaining support in this country. Consequently, if his label is to grow properly, he will have to go abroad. Famous British designers such as

Stella McCartney, Alexander McQueen, John Galiano, Bartley, Hussein Chalayan now show in Mouret, although he hints it won't be permanent" (in Mostyn, p. 7).

### **5.3. The UK PR and Fashion PR Industry**

Promotion plays a crucial role within the fashion industry as designers, fashion houses and companies compete for attention and vie to get featured in the media's editorial coverage. Mintel (2004) suggests that in response to the huge choice of fashion items on the high street and the consumer's desire for fashion information, fashion editorial pages have gained much higher product density.

As claimed by the CIPR (2004)<sup>16</sup>, the UK PR industry is the most highly developed in Europe and at the time of writing had a rate of growth in the number of PR jobs at all levels that was higher than that of any comparable function over the previous fifteen years. In November 2005 the CIPR launched the results of the first major study into the size, nature and composition of the UK PR industry. The research was carried out by CEBR and showed that on a global scale, the UK PR market is second only to that of the US with a turnover of £6.5billion.

The same study further showed that the PR profession contributes £3.4billion to the UK's economic activity and generates £1.1 billion in corporate profits. The annual turnover of PR consultancies is £1.2billion. The UK PR Industry employs around 48,000 people 82% of whom work in-house and 18% work in PR consultancies, 25% of PR practitioners work

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.cipr.co.uk/About/index.htm> [accessed 4th June 2005]

in London. The health, public and not-for-profit sectors are the biggest employers of PR, together accounting for 36% of turnover for PR consultancies and employing 51% of in-house practitioners.

According to fashion PR index The Diary (2005) there are more than 200 PR agencies representing fashion clients in the UK, the majority of them are based in London. This is more than twice as many in comparison to other European “fashion capitals”, such as Milan or Paris (Diary, 2005). Julian Vogel of Modus Publicity one of the UK’s leading fashion PR agencies in a lecture given at the University of Westminster in the Spring of 2007 claimed that there are circa 8000 fashion brands which are represented by over 500 PR consultants in the UK. This statement was supported by members of the fashion PR industry interviewed during the course of this study. It was confirmed that 90% of all UK based fashion companies have some form of press representation, either through agencies, freelance consultants or in-house staff (Fashion Monitor, 2007). Outlined below are the different types of media or communication categories as suggested by Bivins (2004) targeted by the UK fashion PR industry.

#### **5.4. A Brief Excursion into the History of PR**

The literature suggests that the precursors to PR can be found in the publicists who specialised in promoting circuses, theatrical performances, and other public spectacles and modern PR tracing its beginnings to the late 1800s (Cutlip, 1994; Ewen, 1992; Ewen, 1996; Fombrun, 1996; Grunig and Hunt, 1984; Jefkins, 1995; Wilcox, 1992). However, as Ewen

(1992) writes, the field began to emerge as a powerful corporate tool in the US in the late 19th and early 20th century as industrial and business leaders, under attack by a new breed of investigative journalists sought to shape public opinion and stave off governmental interference by hiring experts in "PR". The battlefield for these campaigns and counter-campaigns Ewen claims was the mass media. Most early PR practitioners were originally journalists with first class contacts in the field, and generating favourable publicity was the main aim of those practitioners, a practice that largely applies today (ewen, 1992). As Wilcox (1992) notes, PR initially was publicity. The First World War helped stimulate the development of PR as a profession with early visionaries such as Edward Bernays, Arthur Page, and Harwood Childs who saw PR as a way of 'balancing the interests of organisations and their publics' (Cutlip, 1994).

Bernays was the profession's first theorist. As a nephew of Sigmund Freud, Bernays drew many of his ideas from Freud's theories about the irrational, unconscious motives that shape human behaviour. Bernays is the author of 'Crystallizing Public Opinion' (1923), 'Propaganda' (1928), and 'The Engineering of Consent' (1947). He saw PR as an "applied social science" that uses insights from psychology, sociology, and other disciplines to scientifically manage and manipulate the thinking and behaviour of an irrational and "herd-like" public which arguably specifically applies to the area of fashion PR and the mass following of trends.

### **5.5. Fashion PR - A Historical Perspective**

Over the years PR became a global discipline which was applied within a variety of businesses and different categories of PR developed as it grew in importance. Interestingly the history of PR is very much focused on its political content and seems to leave out the consumer aspect. The literature gives very little information about the history of fashion PR, only by looking at various fashion houses and designers a vague historical image can be drawn. According to Charles-Roux (2005) Coco Chanel famously promoted her own label by entertaining journalists and becoming the face of Chanel. She successfully applied modern PR/ marketing strategies in order to make Chanel an internationally recognised brand. These exercises included the use of famous friends and models to endorse her designs, the creation of costumes for the theatre, the high society and red carpet events, articles within fashion magazines: as well as showing her creations at the 'Exposition of Arts and Techniques' in 1937 and a charity event in Britain in 1932. In 1957 she won the Fashion Oscar.

However despite the fact that fashion coverage has existed long before, according to Savage fashion PR as we know it today did not exist until the 1950s (Savage in King, 2005). According to King (Independent Online, 10th November 2005)<sup>17</sup> in an interview with Percy Savage, 'it was seen as 'vulgar' to have anything in the press apart from Perfume advertisements'. French Vogue was the first European fashion magazine available allowing ground for initial PR exercises. Percy Savage is generally known as the founder of fashion PR (King, 2005). Australian by birth, he became a socialite in the second half of

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<sup>17</sup> The article can be accessed online via <http://news.independent.co.uk/people/profiles/article326156.ece>

the 20th century, counting celebrities, politicians, rock stars and royalty such as Marlene Dietrich, Princess Grace, Elizabeth Taylor, Cristobal Balenciaga, John F. Kennedy, Jean Cocteau, Farah Diba (who became the empress of Iran) as his friends. His networking skills made him a coveted name and an important figure in the establishment of fashion PR. With Lanvin as his first PR client, Savage understood the importance of third party endorsement via the press in order to sell fashion. He was also the first to introduce celebrity endorsement. His biggest coup has been front page coverage of Liz Taylor in a Lanvin dress. "I got the biggest buzz from attaining maximum press coverage for clients; especially press coups. Elizabeth Taylor was to attend the Lanvin show but her flight was delayed," he explains. When Taylor's film company called that evening to ask if she could choose something to wear to her premiere the following night, Savage hot-footed to her hotel with 20 Lanvin dresses. While the actress was trying them on, Savage was on the telephone. "I knew a journalist working for the Herald Tribune, so I called her and got her an exclusive interview," he says. "I then informed the French press that Elizabeth Taylor would be wearing Lanvin to the premiere. It became front-page news in all the papers. The other houses were green with envy." The coup broke the Chambre Syndicale embargo stating that no garment seen on the catwalks could be published in the press until a month after the shows. "That's what caused the scandal," says Savage, "but there was nothing that they could do because it was the client wearing the clothes, not something I'd given to a fashion editor to photograph." [online]<sup>18</sup> So it was Savage who pioneered today's pandemic of celebrities in designer dresses on the red carpet."

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**18** <http://news.independent.co.uk/people/profiles/article326156.ece> [accessed 18th August 2006]



At a lecture attended by the author at the British Library in 2005 Savage claimed that it was the press that expressed a need for proper information flow between designers and fashion houses and the journalists. When Savage moved to London in 1974 Madge Garland editor of British Vogue at the time and Ernestine Carter, fashion editor of the Sunday Times asked him to promote British designers and raise the profile of British fashion within the press. In response to that request he brought together an array of British designers including Zandra Rhodes, Bruce Oldfield and Wendy Dagworthy and hosted a fashion show entitled 'The new Wave' at the Ritz. This show has been the fore runner of London Fashion Week with front row seats allocated to socialites such as Bianca Jagger and royalty such as Princess Margaret.

In the early 1970s Lynne Franks, a former journalist, opened Lynne Franks PR. She was one of the first UK agencies to take on fashion clients. In her Bibliography she explains that the agency environment allowed her to take on more than one client and exhibiting their collections in a specifically fitted showroom where press could come and view the latest pieces (Franks, 2004). This research has found that she launched Tommy Hilfiger in the UK as well as put London Fashion Week on the international fashion calendar. The cult TV series 'Absolutely Fabulous' is based on Lynne Franks.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s a large number of fashion PR agencies opened up in London. Amongst them were JRB, Jenny Halpern Associates, Janine du Plessis PR and Red Rooster. Janine Roxborough Bunce of JRB famously promoted Hardy Amies as the couturier to the Queen and made him a household name. Up until his death the PR

relationship between the agency and the couturier house remained strong and even now JRB still represents the fashion house of Hardy Amies. Red Rooster started business in the early 1990s and successfully promoted up and coming fashion street labels among them 'Red or Dead' a funky London street wear brand which was promoted via unheard of PR techniques such as guerilla campaigns to the press and the public and also included a show at London Fashion Week.

## **5.6. Summary**

This chapter acts as a defining pillar for the foundation of this thesis. It provides a detailed outline of the UK PR and fashion PR industry and its context. Looking at the historical development as well as recent figures of market structure and size a clear picture of the research subject can be drawn. It is important to note that although the area of fashion PR lacks academic attention, this chapter has shown its importance and omnipresence over the past seven decades and even before. It emerged that the fashion industry has always had an interest in communicating with the consumer and has used tools of promotion which are still applied by the fashion PR industry today. These tools mainly consisted of product placement but direct promotion as in the case of Coco Chanel who famously made fashion editors her friends were repeatedly used. Percy Savage, known as the first fashion PR man, introduced celebrity endorsement and made it a key communications method. Further information on the fashion industry itself helps understand the confines within which fashion PR acts as a representative today.

## **Part IV - Research**

## **Chapter 6: Research Analysis**

### **6.1. Introduction**

Chapter six states the hypothesis of this study and gives a detailed account of the research carried out in order to back up the hypothesis that fashion print media coverage is largely created by fashion PR.

As noted in the introductory chapter, it is the aim of this study to show that fashion PR is directly accountable for the vast amount of fashion coverage within UK newspapers today. This is being accomplished through content analysis of eight UK newspapers as described further below, as well as through semi structured interviews with industry insiders and participant observation.

### **6.2. Pilot Study**

With reference to the telephone survey outlined in Part I, Chapter 1, a preliminary study of one week's content analysis was carried out in September 2003 prior to the actual content analysis in order to establish the content analysis research sample and test which elements need addressing within the coding to retrieve relevant research data and to produce an effective coding schedule. Within this initial research it transpired that various factors in terms of fashion coverage are closely interlinked.

The majority of fashion coverage, which took place in the week beginning 8<sup>th</sup> September 2003, was accompanied by photographic footage of some sort. These photographs were either special fashion shoots using models, or they were product shots featuring fashion items and accessories photographed flat. A total of 134 fashion related photographs were detected during that week. This not only confirmed the vast daily presence of fashion coverage but also raised the first question as to how crucial visual aids are in connection with fashion coverage and in what way fashion PR needs to address this. Consequently this finding needed to be taken further into consideration and as a result had to be taken up in the ultimate coding schedule. A differentiation between pages and column inches of text and photographs was established to show the correlation between the two and to discern their importance respectively.

Furthermore it became apparent within that test study that most fashion related features and articles appear to have a 'story' surrounding the coverage. This was frequently underlined by using noticeable headlines, which differed notably from the traditional newspaper headline, thus another detail that needed to be taken up within the coding.

Altogether there were 110 pages of coverage associated with fashion (this excludes advertising pages), 44 of which were articles and features directly fashion related. This finding on its own is interesting in relation to the amount of photographic material mentioned above (134 photographs) and in this regard raises the question as to how important the written word is within fashion coverage. This discovery required further attention within the final coding schedule and two special columns entitled '*pages and*

*column inches of fashion coverage*', which were then further divided into '*pages and column inches of text*' and '*pages and column inches of photographic material*' were introduced.

An additional crucial finding in the context of fashion PR and fashion newspaper coverage which was established during the pilot study was the fact that an extremely large proportion of the coverage within that week had a direct connection between celebrities and fashion. In fact at times it was difficult to establish whether the item was a celebrity article or a fashion one. Mainly this was achieved through either photographic material, showing celebrities wearing certain fashion items or in the form of interviews and advice columns in which celebrities would talk about their personal taste in fashion or give advice as to what they thought fashionable. All in all there were 11 of such celebrity features during that week. As a result this phenomenon had to be taken up within the coding schedule for further investigation. Under the main category '*Type of Article/Item*' celebrity coverage was given a sub-category.

Overall, the preliminary study has shown the considerable daily presence of fashion coverage within UK newspapers (this includes the week-end supplements of the above newspapers, which are either entirely devoted to fashion or have a section on fashion) and helped considerably with the construction of an effective coding schedule. An overall weekly schedule was established first with the intention to tighten up the data. This was ultimately followed by an overall schedule, containing all the research data that was

collected over the six months period. Table 7 shows an example of a daily coding schedule for data analysis.

**Table: 7**

**Example of Coding Schedule for one Day of Content Analysis Coding**

<b>Newspaper Sample</b>	<b>Newspaper</b>
1.Daily Telegraph	
2.The Times	
3.The Guardian	
4.The Independent	
5.The Express	
6.The Financial Times	
7.The Daily Mail	
8.Daily Mirror	8 – 3am Magazine
<b>Date-Month-Year</b>	19/05/04
<b>Headline (copy verbatim)</b>	Celebrity Style – Peachy Keen & Handbag of the week – it might be a difficult colour to wear, but be inspired by these stars who look peachy in er, peach...



**Exact positioning of Article in Newspaper**

---

Page Number	33
Referencing	none
<b>Advertising of article within the newspaper</b>	none

---

**Name of Journalist**

---

Journalist/ Author	Leigh Miller
(name & designation, if given, verbatim)	

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**Article Length /Column Length**

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Pages of text	Captions
Inches of text	2
Pages of pics	Inserts
Inches of pics	4

---

**Prominence of Headline**

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Prominence of Headline	Small black bold letters on peach in box
(bold, capitals, etc.)	next to Rachel Stevens feature

---

**Type of Article/ Item**

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1 Main News Story	
2 Other News Story	
3 Feature Article	
4 Celebrity Article	4 – Minnie Driver, Jenny Frost, Heather Graham, Jennifer Lopez
5 Editorial	
6 Celebrity Interview	
7 Fashion Insider Interview	
8 Photo Shoot	
9 Product Article/ Shoot	
10 Promotional Feature	
11 Competition	
12 Fashion Column/ regular feature	12 – part of the “Celebrity Style” column
13 Other	

---

**Fashion Focus**

---

1 Fashion is the main focus	1
2 Fashion is a secondary focus	
3 Fashion is mentioned only in passing	

---

### **Specification of Fashion**

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1 Designer Fashion & name of designer	Lulu Guinness Handbags
2 High Street Fashion & name of label	
3 Both	
4 Neither	

---

### **Advertising surrounding the article**

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none

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## **6.3. The Detailed Examination of Newspaper Fashion Coverage**

**(January 2004 – June 2004)**

To approach the research problem and to discern whether and to what extent fashion PR is the key force behind fashion newspaper coverage a quantitative investigation had to be carried out. Thus content analysis has been chosen as the key research method.

Starting on the 29th December 2003, ending on 6th June 2004, the fashion content within the previously mentioned research sample of eight main British newspapers, covering a cross section of tabloids and broadsheets was analysed (see Table 12).

The question as to why focus the research on newspapers and not on the rather more obvious and influential fashion or ‘glossy’ magazines may arise at this point. Fashion magazines are typically made up of 80% advertising leaving only 20% of the magazine for

editorial coverage (Tungate, 2005). Newspapers, although also dependent upon advertising revenue, are arguably keener on the news angle. According to Glassborow (in Tungate, 2005 p.81) "...some of the best fashion journalism can be found in newspapers". Thus the aim of this research is to probe the level of impact fashion PR has over fashion reporting in this rather traditional medium.

Applying this quantitative research method, it was intended to demonstrate the vast impact fashion PR has on fashion content within British newspapers and as a consequence show that it is in fact largely responsible for the increase in newspaper fashion coverage, as well as possibly for the introduction of newspaper fashion supplements in the mid 1990s.

Fashion newspaper coverage is given an important role within newspaper lifestyle journalism and special fashion teams inform the readers about trends and latest fashions. The fashion team is generally made up of one fashion director, one or more fashion editors and a number of fashion assistants. As this research has found, the fashion desk of The Daily Telegraph for example is headed by Fashion Director Hilary Alexander who is helped by her editor Clare Coulson who was promoted from fashion writer in 2005. They have an ongoing scheme of work placements offering young graduates the chance of getting a feel for the industry for one or two weeks. The Telegraph like all other newspapers, frequently uses freelance writers, stylists and photographers who are employed depending on the journalistic calendar, which is set by the fashion director for the whole year, but is more of a framework with room for changes.

The various articles and features are discussed with the whole in-house fashion team and the editors are briefed on what to research and write about, photo shoots are also being scheduled. All newspapers as opposed to magazines have a tight schedule and work approximately a week up to a few days in advance. This research has found that the tabloids, The Mirror and the Daily Mail in particular, are the prime employers of fashion staff, employing more than just one fashion team but groups of journalists covering different fashion related subject areas. However with the emergence of newspaper supplements in the early 1990s, some of which have a fashion section, others are largely focused on just fashion, such as the Sunday Times Style Magazine, newspapers now employ more fashion staff and have longer lead times. There is usually a separate fashion team for the supplements, as well as freelance fashion writers who are also used frequently for specific features. They often function as outside experts that are brought in to write about certain fashion trends or items. Lucinda Chambers, fashion editor of British Vogue, for example writes for a cross section of newspapers on issues related to fashion. Due to her position at Vogue, which is regarded as the world's leading fashion magazine, she is referred to as an expert within her field.

**Table: 8**

**Content Analysis Research Sample**

The Daily Telegraph
The Times
The Daily Mail
The Guardian
The Independent
The Express
Financial Times
The Mirror

Although newspaper circulation has been in decline over the past decade<sup>19</sup> it is safe to say that in PR terms they still reach a vast potential audience which makes them an extremely important target for fashion PR. A further interesting point brought up by the pilot study was that the majority of articles and product features were entirely non-critical, fashion was mainly looked at from a ‘positive’ angle especially within product features. This approach only changed when a celebrity’s fashion faux pas was the main focus of the item or in features with a newsworthy angle such as articles surrounding fashion week which showed a certain amount of criticism. Thus the question was raised as to how much journalistic research generally goes into fashion coverage and to what extent might the PR industry be responsible for the nature of the coverage (i.e. are press releases just being copied?). This

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/section.asp?navcode=161> – accessed 4<sup>th</sup> September 2009

question will be looked at in closer detail during the discussion part of this investigation as it was taken up within the semi structured interviews.

Originally, 12 months of content analysis were anticipated; however, during the first three months of research a certain pattern transpired, which was mainly in the form of repetitiveness as well as continual quantity of fashion coverage which led to the decision that sufficient data can be retrieved over a lesser period - six months. The intense monitoring of fashion newspaper coverage has emphasised the findings of the preliminary study as well as encountered further discoveries which will be addressed in this chapter.

Throughout the six months research period continuous presence of fashion coverage transpired and five out of the eight sample newspapers carried fashion coverage on a daily basis. On weekends this expanded to the whole of the sample group. Overall the total amount of fashion pieces within the above listed titles from January 2003 until June 2004 comes to 632 with 578 of actual pages totally devoted to fashion coverage, which equals 8,993 column inches.

Table 9 displays the overall quantity of fashion features within the sample group of newspapers over six months.

**Table: 9**

**Overall Quantity of Fashion Coverage in pages within the Sample of Newspapers  
from 29<sup>th</sup> December 2003 – 6<sup>th</sup> June 2004**

<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	<i>Times</i>	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Independent</i>	<i>Express</i>	<i>FT</i>	<i>Daily Mail</i>	<i>Daily Mirror</i>
78	82	62	55	90	47	119	99

Source: Table based on own research data

These numbers alone shed light on the vast potential for fashion PR, especially since they are purely based on product endorsement only and do not include pages of advertising. As demonstrated in Table 14 the amount of coverage varied significantly between the various titles of the chosen research sample.

The most fashion related features were found within the tabloids. The Daily Mail came out as the prime publication for carrying fashion content (119 pages), followed by The Mirror (99 pages) and the Express (90 pages). Throughout this coverage photographic material continuously appeared which confirms the original finding of the pilot study. It consisted of product shots showing fashion items flat, as well as photo shoots involving models wearing fashion items & accessories.



The visual content within fashion coverage throughout all sample newspapers is vast; it supersedes the amount of column inches made up of text by 2/3rds. Text is mainly used as an explanatory tool to underline the visual content. This is primarily achieved through captions, which are small lines of text usually beside or underneath a photograph stating the make of the garment and often its price and where it can be purchased.

Out of the broadsheets The Times emerged as the publication with the highest fashion content. 82 pages were dedicated to fashion coverage. This was followed by the Daily Telegraph with 78 pages, then The Guardian with a fashion content of 62 pages, the Independent at 55 pages and lastly the Financial Times with 47 pages.

These figures demonstrate the vast potential that newspapers offer to the fashion PR industry. However in order to confirm this hypothesis further enquiry was needed and this point was taken up within the semi-structured interviews which will be discussed later on in this chapter.

A further finding that emerged whilst carrying out the content analysis was an omnipresence of fashion advertising. Advertisements by fashion designers or companies often appeared next or in close proximity to fashion coverage. The author's previous experience in the fashion PR industry suggested that advertising has always played a significant role and therefore it seemed of importance to investigate the context between fashion PR and fashion advertising further. It was thus taken up within the data coding schedule as a column entitled '*advertising surrounding the feature*'. Here the actual

amount of advertising features was counted and furthermore the exact positioning in relation to the fashion feature as well as the advertising company was noted. Again this finding needed further attention and was addressed during the interview part of the research and will be discussed later.

An essential discovery that transpired throughout this empiric inquiry was a definite correspondence between fashion coverage and the time of week or month. The majority was found within the weekend editions and mainly within the various supplements. However Thursday and Friday seemed almost equally significant days for the appearance of fashion coverage. A telephone survey to five fashion journalists carried out in May 2005 brought up the fact that newspapers expect their readers to take time to read fashion coverage on the weekend, more than they would during the week. The rationale for this is to inspire the readers to purchase fashion products over the weekend and though fashion PR is not officially linked to sales figures, it is ultimately the aim for a featured fashion item to provoke sales. To increase sales over and above making a product known are the main incentives for fashion companies to employ PR professionals. If sales go up after a certain fashion item has been featured within a newspaper this is the direct prove that PR has worked at its best. Furthermore fashion companies are more keen to advertise in the weekend editions for the same reasons.

With reference to frequency, it appeared that the tabloids feature fashion also frequently on weekdays. Further investigation into this finding has brought up that this is primarily due to their readership which is made up of 35% of stay-at-home individuals, most of whom are

female and are thought of potentially having the time to inform themselves and purchase fashion products during the week. Outlined over the next few pages is the overall data collected during the six months of content analysis supported by charts to highlight the most significant findings.

Time span of content analysis

29.12.03 – 06.06.04

Fashion Pieces during that time span

632

Overall Pages of Fashion Coverage

578

Overall Number of Column Inches

8993

The research data above gives an exact account of the quantity of fashion coverage detected during the content analysis.

**Table: 10**

**Overall Quantity of Fashion Coverage in pages within each of the Sample Newspapers**

<i>Daily</i>	<i>Times</i>	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Independent</i>	<i>Express</i>	<i>FT</i>	<i>Daily</i>	<i>Daily</i>
<i>Telegraph</i>						<i>Mail</i>	<i>Mirror</i>
78	82	62	55	90	47	119	99

Source: Table based on own research data

**Table: 11**

**Type of Fashion Coverage in pages:**

<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>G</i>	<i>H</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>J</i>	<i>K</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>M</i>
16	49	8	187	46	8	12	125	107	7	2	4	14

**Key:**

- A = Main News Story - with fashion being the prime focus
- B = Other News Story – not a main story but with fashion taking the prime focus
- C = Feature Article – a created fashion story but not a news story
- D = Celebrity Feature – fashion main subject within a celebrity article
- E = Editorial – fashion as standard editorial ( in designated fashion pages)
- F = Interview – with fashion designers
- G = Celebrity Interview
- H = Photo Shoot – fashion photographed on models
- I = Product Article/ Shoot – fashion photographed flat
- J = Promotional Feature – paid for articles/ photo shoots featuring fashion
- K = Competition – paid for competitions with a fashion prize to win.
- L = Other -

Source: Table based on own research data.

The above data outlines the large number of pages within the different categories of fashion to give a clear idea of the actual presence of fashion with UK newspapers and thus the potential for PR.

The next step within the content analysis was to pay attention to the exact nature of the fashion coverage as this is of particular concern in terms of PR. Thirteen different types of fashion coverage were identified. Table 16 below shows the various categories along with their overall appearance throughout the sample group.

Newspapers as opposed to magazines approach fashion coverage from a different angle and arguably newsworthiness is at the forefront of their content. Thus the first two categories which are entitled '*Main News Story*' and '*Other News Story*' are of prime interest. Fashion appeared as a main news story with coverage on the front pages sixteen times, most notably when new collections were viewed during London Fashion week. This finding occurred in the tabloids as well as within the more traditional broadsheets in particular the Times and the Daily Telegraph. There is a cross-over however with the third category, '*Celebrity Article*'. In March 2004 for example photo coverage of Scarlett Johansson was featured on every front page of the sample group on the day following her win at the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA). Interestingly it was not Johansson's acting skills that made the front page news but her dress designed by the Italian designer Miuccia Prada. Prada was mentioned in every headline thus putting fashion at the forefront. The coverage has been supported by photographs showing the actress in the golden gown throughout.

The occurrence of fashion in combination with celebrities has been omnipresent throughout the course of the content analysis and also during the latter parts of the research. In fact the connection transpired as such a strong one that it has been addressed separately in this thesis. '*Feature Articles*' discussing certain fashion items emerged only eight times during the research period however the large part of '*Celebrity Features*' also contains some feature articles and there is hence a cross-over. Feature articles were written by either the paper's fashion editor or an independent fashion features writer.

'*Editorial*' in general emerged 46 times with a slight dominance on the tabloid side. Fashion was discussed in various ways, mainly journalists expressing their viewpoints on new trends and particular garments. This was often expressed by picking out special fashion items and discussing those in closer detail, this was in all cases supported by visuals.

Eight '*Interviews*' were counted, all of which were with non-specific interviewees and often carried out on the street. People were asked about certain trends or interviewed about a particular garment they were wearing. A particular trend within this type of newspaper fashion interview transpired in the form of surveys – these surveys consisted of short open end questions. A second interview category was identified in the form of the '*Fashion Insider Interview*', during which designers or other fashion professionals were discussing new trends and particular garments that feature within their collections. These interviews were given more of a news angle and most of them, particularly those involving an important designer, were carried out by the newspaper's fashion editor.



*‘Celebrity Interviews’* emerged twelve times during the research period. They were always supported by strong visuals. There was a clear dominance of certain celebrities who were regarded as ‘fashionable’ opinion formers during that time (see Table 12)

Table 12 lists the detected celebrities in order of frequency.

**Table: 12**

**Most mentioned Celebrities**

<b>Female Celebrities</b>	
Kylie Minogue	47
Gwyneth Paltrow	42
Scarlett Johansson	41
Jennifer Aniston	39
Sienna Miller	37
Kate Moss	35
Victoria Beckham	32
Liz Hurley	30
Nicole Kidman	29
Madonna	27
Zara Phillips	24
Paris Hilton	23
Nicky Hilton	21
Jade Goody	18
Cate Blanchet	16
Jordan	15
Courtney Cox Arquette	13
Naomi Campbell	11
Sophie Dahl	10
Heidi Klum	10
Giselle Buendchen	9
Martine McCutcheon	9
Kelly Osborne	8
Nancy del Olio	7
Elle McPherson	7
Laura Baily	6
Holly Valance	5
Jody Marsh	5

<b>Male Celebrities</b>	
David Beckham	27
Robbie Williams	27
Elton John	22
Jude law	17
Jamie Oliver	15
Rupert Everett	11
Prince Charles	9
Peter Andre	5

Source: Tables based on own research data .

The above research findings give an exact account as to how many times a particular celebrity was mentioned in connection with fashion during the time of the content analysis. This was an important factor for ongoing research measures as some names are directly linked to fashion and are therefore vital for PR activities.

It is important to note that the vast majority of fashion newspaper coverage is based on female clothing however male fashion is also covered though to a far lesser extent, yet male celebrities appear regularly within the fashion pages. In fact there seems a growing amount of male fashion coverage especially within the weekend issues of the FT, the Times and The Telegraph. The question arises as to where the dependencies lie, whether celebrities are the catalyser for fashion coverage or whether it is the other way round. This enquiry will be addressed in the ‘Research Findings & Discussion’ chapter.

A further finding is the large amount of photo shoots which underline once more the huge importance that lies within visual content and fashion coverage. Within the coding a conscious separation was made between '*Photo Shoots*' which involve models and '*Product Shots*' which only feature the actual garment or accessory – these were not the visuals that accompanied written fashion content but photographs that were commissioned by the relevant newspaper. All in all there were 125 '*Photo Shoots*' and 107 '*Product Shots*' detected during the research period, making this the largest quantity of the measured fashion content. Fashion photo shoots as well as product shots within newspapers are mainly carried out by freelance photographers which are appointed by the fashion editors. Stylists who style the shoot are also mainly freelance however some such as the Daily Mail employ their own fashion stylist who is also in charge of booking locations for photo-shoots.

'*Promotional Features*' emerged only twice. These were features entirely paid for by the fashion company. A small indication at the right top hand corner saying 'Promotion' identified the feature as advertising as opposed to un-paid for fashion coverage. The Daily Mail ran two fashion competitions, which also fall under the category of promotion, i.e. paid for coverage and therefore not PR, in their 'Femail' section during the research period. A question was posed to the reader and the first five right responses were honoured with prizes which in these particular cases were a handbag and jewellery. This form of advertising however is far more common within magazines.

A further differentiation was made in terms of the actual focus that was given to fashion within the coverage. Table 13 shows the quantity of items that had fashion as a main focus, a secondary focus or where it was only mentioned in passing, figure 6 provides a visual overview of that finding.

**Table: 13**

**Fashion Focus in Pages**

<i>Fashion is the main focus</i>	<i>Fashion is a secondary focus</i>	<i>Fashion is only mentioned in passing</i>
369	182	81

Source: Table based on own research data.

Figure 6 sums up the previous research data and the figures are a further proof for the vast existence of fashion content within British newspapers and as these numbers only show non-paid for coverage thus do not include fashion advertising, they sum up the immense potential that the fashion PR industry has at its disposal.

The ‘*Specification of Fashion*’ was an additional item that was taken up within the coding in order to illustrate the significance that was given to the various categories of fashion. Table 19 below demonstrates the detected categories and outlines the quantities of their appearance.

**Table: 14**

**Specification of Fashion.**

<i>Designer</i> <i>(top end exclusive</i> <i>clothing)</i>	<i>High street</i> <i>(mid-market to low-</i> <i>market clothing)</i>	<i>Designer &amp; High</i>	<i>No specification</i>
189	136	152	159

Source: Table based on own research data

It transpired that high end designer fashion is most frequently featured, closely followed by the middle and low end markets also known as high street fashion. Often both, designer and high street fashion was mentioned within the same article/feature. Coverage containing fashion without any specification appeared 159 times. These were largely articles or features where certain styles of garments were discussed without direct reference as to who made or sold them.

There was however a clear preference of designers and high street labels that were mentioned more frequently than others. Prada and Gucci are the leaders on the designer side with 66 and 60 counts respectively whereas Harvey Nichlos and Harrods were the most repeatedly mentioned department stores (25 and 23 counts), Topshop and Gap emerging as the most recurrently mentioned high street stores with 66 and 64 counts. Table 20 below lists the frequency of designers, department stores and high street stores with their respective figures in terms of appearance.

**Table: 15****Ranking of Mentioned Designers and Frequency in Pages**

<i>Designer</i>	<i>No. Mentions</i>
Prada	66
Gucci	60
Louis Vuitton	56
Chanel	50
Dolce & Gabbana	49
Versace	42
YSL Rive Gauche	39
Manolo Blahnik	39
Jimmy Choo	37
Dior	36
Burberry	27
Seven Jeans	26
Armani	24
Diane von Fuerstenberg	23
Missoni	22
La Perla	22
Gina	22
Paul & Joe	20
DKNY	18
Paul Smith	17
Mulberry	15
Marc Jacobs	13
Stella McCartney	13
Earl Jeans	12
Chloe	12
Hermes	12
Ralph Lauren	12
Pucci	11

Source: Table based on own research data.



**Table: 16**

**Most Frequently Mentioned Department Stores.**

<i>Department Store</i>	<i>No. Mentions</i>
Harvey Nichols	25
Harrods	23
Fenwicks	15
Selfridges	12
John Lewis	12
Liberty	8

Source: Table based on own research data.

**Table: 17**

**Most Frequently Mentioned High Street Stores**

<i>High Street Store</i>	<i>No. Mentions</i>
Topshop	66
Gap	64
M&S	64
H&M	62
New Look	57
Zara	54
Miss Sixty	54
George at ASDA	49
Warehouse	47
Oasis	45
Mango	39
Accessorize	39
Miss Selfridge	32
River Island	27
Monsoon	26
Kookai	23
Jigsaw	21
Matalan	21
Dorothy Perkins	19
Levis	17
Whistles	17
MK One	16
Tesco	16
La Redoute	15
Hobbs	14
Boden	12
East	9

Source: Table based on own research data.

These tables and figures illustrate in detail the vast existence and nature of fashion coverage and more specifically point out which fashion companies get the most frequent coverage. The establishing of exact numbers of mentions for both designers and department stores were a further vital step towards the investigation of the extent of PR involved in the process of achieving newspaper coverage. It further gave a vital idea as to which companies use PR and to what degree. For the purpose of this study the PR activities carried out by these companies were investigated further. In this regard it is important to note that Prada, Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Dolce & Gabbana and Versace were also the most frequently detected advertisers.

Throughout this part of the research it became apparent that fashion coverage has its own style parameters which varies greatly from traditional newspaper writing. On the whole fashion coverage brings along a far more unconventional way of writing. This becomes prominent within the headlines, the layout of the articles as well as in the wording. Text is largely kept to a minimum hence the style of writing is brief, often descriptive yet informal. In fact a specific fashion terminology seems to have emerged with vocabulary entirely created for the fashion industry. Words such as '*directional*' (meaning ahead of or indicating a new trend), '*trendsetter*' or '*fashionista*' are just a few examples.

As for the text and style of fashion writing, it emerged that headlines within fashion newspaper coverage are mostly non-traditional and vary from oversized black letters on white to colourful scripts and fonts. It is obvious that the fashion press intends to stand out from the hard news and attract the reader's attention through such visual exercises.

In order to measure fashion content correctly it was important to establish its relation to fashion advertising. Within the coding a special column was set up which identified the advertisements that surrounded the coverage. A further differentiation was made in terms of the actual advertiser – fashion or non fashion – to investigate if this is possibly related to the actual coverage. Table 18 displays the quantity of advertisements featured in direct proximity of the fashion coverage within the sample group of newspapers. Special reference is made to the amount of advertising that was actually fashion related.

**Table: 18**

**Advertising (ads) surrounding Fashion Coverage in Pages of which Fashion related in pages**

<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>G</i>	<i>H</i>
45 ads	43 ads	37 ads	34 ads	54 ads	28 ads,	51 ads,	43 ads,
25	32	28	23	37	19	39	31
fashion	fashion	fashion	fashion	fashion	fashion	fashion	fashion
related	related	related	related	related	related	related	related

Key:

A = Daily Telegraph

B = Times

C = Guardian

D = Independent

E = Express

F = FT

G = Daily Mail

H = Daily Mirror

Source: Table based on own research data.

The majority of advertisements were fashion related however interestingly a significant amount of the directly surrounding advertising was not. It emerged that the large fashion houses had their advertisements placed in more prominent positions within the newspaper or the supplement. It also transpired that the majority of fashion features mentioned the advertising companies within the coverage, a finding which was taken up within the semi structured interviews.

The content analysis was carried out with the aim of supporting the argument for the existence of the direct relationship between fashion PR and newspaper fashion content. Through the collection of quantitative data the intent was to work backwards and recognise the various forms of fashion coverage and then discern whether and in what way PR activity was involved or possibly responsible for it.

Firstly the actual quantity of newspapers along with their large circulation figures and readership, all of which arguably make for a considerable PR target, had to be looked at in closer detail. Julian Vogel of Modus Publicity states that newspapers because of their vast circulation figures are of vital importance to the fashion PR industry and a prime target, featuring in 90% of their campaigns (interview notes 6<sup>th</sup> June 2007). The consistent daily presence of fashion coverage within the sample group of newspapers supports this statement and raises the question as to how this is achieved. Taking into consideration the structure of newspaper fashion departments, discussed previously, and the rather small fashion teams in comparison to the actual amount of fashion coverage, the question arises as to how much journalistic research is undertaken and to what extent might the coverage

be a product of the PR industry. This vital point needed further investigation which was achieved through analysis of the actual fashion coverage within the different newspapers and then cross referenced to the PR efforts made.

The research showed that the tabloids carry nearly twice as much fashion content as the Guardian (62 pieces), the Independent (55 pieces) or the FT (47 pieces). The Daily Mail carried 119 pieces of fashion coverage, the Daily Mirror 99 pieces and the Express 90 pieces. The two broadsheets also high on fashion content are the Times with 82 pieces and The Daily Telegraph with 78 pieces.

The notable variables of fashion content within the different titles and their relevance to fashion PR needed further examination. One theory is that the readership might be responsible for this emergence. The Newspaper Marketing Agency claims that the Daily Mail has an actual based census data (ABC) figure of 2,323,858 which rises to over 3 million copies with a readership in excess of 6.2 million on a Saturday, 52% is made up of female readers<sup>20</sup> which arguably makes this title particularly attractive to fashion companies and therefore ultimately to fashion PR. Julian Vogel in an interview for this research<sup>21</sup> supports this theory and states that the diverse readership of the Daily Mail makes it a prime target for fashion PR activity. He expands further by explaining that the diverse readership is in fact the reason for the diversity of the actual coverage. Whilst carrying out the content analysis it transpired that the Daily Mail in particular covers a great spectrum of fashion from low end high street fashion labels up to high end designer and

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.nmauk.co.uk/nma/do/live/factsAndFigures?newspaperID=14> [accessed on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2008]

<sup>21</sup> Interview date 6<sup>th</sup> June 2007, see transcript in the Appendix.

haute couture garments and accessories. It is important to note that The Express as well as the Mirror tend to cover the low end of the fashion market, whereas The Times, The Telegraph, The FT, The Guardian and the Independent cover the mid and high end of the fashion spectrum.

An interesting finding which transpired throughout the content analysis is the non-critical nature of fashion coverage. The majority of articles were written in favour of the featured fashion product, a finding which was entirely supported during the interview part of this study as well. Photo shoots however were mainly accompanied by captions which were written from a largely neutral stand point.

#### **6.4. Tracing of PR Material**

In order to establish the direct impact PR has on fashion newspaper content a further part of the research laid within the tracing of PR material that may have been the catalyser for the emergent coverage. The results of which are discussed in closer detail in the discussion chapter of this study.

A sample of five frequently mentioned fashion companies was chosen and through contacts as well as careful examination of the industry trade publications Fashion Monitor and The Diary it was determined which PR agencies or consultants represented the relevant companies if they were not previously known to the author.



A lengthy process of telephone and one to one personal conversations lead to the compilation of PR material, consisting of press releases, visuals, invitations and other documents with publicity purpose. These were analysed and cross referenced with relevant press coverage in order to reveal any direct crossovers.

It emerged that there was a direct reference within each piece of press material to the relevant article in the newspaper. Lines were taken verbatim from press releases and at times the whole release was copied. Visuals provided by PR companies were frequently used within the coverage. In fact this research has shown that newspapers due to time and budget constraints now depend on visuals distributed by PR companies. These have to come with permission for publication.

Press invitations to specially staged PR events such as the launch of the new Matthew Williamson flagship store on Bruton Street in March 2004 resulted in coverage across newspapers and on one occasion the journalist of the relevant paper was not even in attendance. The launch was preceded by a carefully organised PR campaign through London agency Beverly Cable PR. Prior to the launch of the flagship store Matthew Williamson made headlines by dressing the actresses Joely Richardson & Sienna Miller for the Golden Globe Awards, both of which were invited to the opening (see Appendix 6).

The houses of Prada and Dior both of which employ their own PR people as well as seeking advice from outside agencies involved advertising campaigns into their respective PR strategies which led to the resulting coverage being combined with the advertising in

the form of a double page spread. Prada in particular has since established the Prada Foundation (Fondazione Prada) which supports modern art and coverage within newspapers appears without fashion being the prime focus.

#### **6.5. Summary of Interviews with Industry Professionals.**

Verbatim transcripts of the several interviews with PR and fashion industry professionals are provided in the Appendix. A summary of some of these interviews is presented below.

- **Summary of Interview with Kate Halfpenny (K.H.) Freelance Fashion Stylist**  
**Interview Date: 04.04.2007.**

This self employed/freelance fashion stylist made several points concerning the relationship between PR and the fashion industry today. In this regard, K.H. points out the importance of fashion PR in her industry, and noted that, “Whenever I am hired for a photo shoot, I call in samples from PR agencies.” This stylist suggested that the most distinctive function of consumer/fashion PR was “to promote fashion in every form possible,” and indicated that although these promotions were primarily directed at the press, other avenues such as store and promotional events should also be considered. Pointing to the hectic nature of the business, K.H. related that she could not work efficiently without the assistance of fashion PR and they represent a source of referrals and inspiration as well. As for the most essential PR techniques for a successful styling assignment, K.H. emphasised the time-sensitive nature of her work and remarked that “speed is of the essence.” This stylist also

commented on the tacit knowledge that PR professionals were able to use in helping her accomplish her goals in terms of currently popular trends and styles.

Finally, K.H. pointed out the importance of celebrity endorsements in her line of work, and indicated that approximately 80% of her work was done in connection with celebrities., emphasising that, “Fashion and celebrities go hand in hand – it is a two-way relationship. The celebrities get to wear the latest trends and the designers get their name in the press...that is the way!”

- **Interview with Gabriele Shaw (G.S.) Director of Gabriele Shaw Communications (GSC)**

**(Interview Date 6th October 2004)**

This interviewee stated that 20 people were employed at this company with five of them responsible for working on fashion alone for three PR clients. Noting the various occupational backgrounds of the fashion PR staff, G.S. stated that most of them had “a degree of some sort,” but pointed out that there had been an increasing number of applicants with degrees in media or PR. G.S. also indicated that the company hires college students as interns on occasion and hires them full-time upon graduation; G.S. said these returning interns were usually rapidly promoted within the organisation.

Reiterating a common theme that emerged during the interviews, G.S. stated that the relationship between the press and PR was vital to her business and also pointed to the mutually beneficial nature of the relationship. As to the most distinctive function of consumer/fashion PR, G.S. believed that it was important to “be as informative and helpful to journalists as possible, to supply them with the samples they need and be speedy in replying to all their requests. This is a fast living industry with a very fast turn around, trends come and go and it is important to stay on top of them – always be a step ahead.”

Concerning the influence of consumer/fashion coverage on fashion trends, G.S. suggested that this process is self-perpetuating to the extent that if fashion journalists like a given fashion item it is likely that they will provide coverage on it; conversely, if fashion journalists do not like a given fashion item, they will probably not give it much attention. This accounts for the attempts by the fashion industry to make their products more appealing to fashion journalists by “the spoiling treatment of freebies, samples and invitations.”

An important issue to emerge from this interview was the inextricable link between advertising and PR, with its importance in newspapers being outweighed by its importance in magazine advertising. G.S. remarked that, “Magazines are bound to give free coverage to their advertisers. Newspapers have less space for advertising due to their much shorter life span, however there is some scope. Advertising is also important in terms of giving a label or a trend an ‘image’ and though it is paid for coverage as opposed to unpaid, it creates a certain buzz in itself.”

Despite these considerations, though, G.S. added that she still believed that PR is more effective in the long run as most people tend to regard the opinions of experts seriously, and fashion editors are generally considered to be experts in their field. Fashion editors are also known to be susceptible to manipulation by knowledgeable industry professionals. G.S. made the point that this approach represents one of the most successful techniques for ensuring a successful fashion PR campaign: “Spoiling journalists is always a good way of attracting their attention, this can be in the form of freebies or party invitations.

As to the approximate time-span from the start of a PR campaign to the first results in terms of press coverage, G.S. indicated that this depended on the client and the publication involved; magazines, she said, typically work three to four months ahead before any feedback is received, but with newspapers and television, the results are known immediately.

Celebrity endorsement gives the label or designer a ‘face’ with which people can either associate or aspire to.” As the fashion industry totally depends on visuals, celebrities have vast influence. There is also a co-dependence as for example the right or wrong dress worn to the Academy Award Ceremony can make or break an actress. Designers constantly try and get their dresses on famous people, it adds enormous credibility and we as the PRs are forever trying to get our clients’ products on them.”

As noted above, the relationship between the fashion industry and fashion press is an intimate one, with the need for mutual support being recognised and appreciated. This point

was confirmed by G.S. who reported that her company was in constant contact with the press (she indicated they communicated on a daily basis) to determine what was in demand and what was needed. In addition, G.S. intimated that in some cases, these contacts were more for their “schmooze” value than anything: “We also call them for feedback, send them presents on their birthdays and for Christmas and generally try and keep them interested.”

- **Interview with Janine du Plessis.(J.d.P.) of Du Plessis PR**

**(Interview Date 17th May 2006)**

This PR expert used to run her own agency but has retired a few years ago, stating that the fashion PR industry is ‘far too exhausting’ and really only suitable for young people with no families.

When still in business, her company was staffed by just herself and an occasional secretary and/or intern. Of these, just J.d.P. was responsible for working with the fashion industry, and the company at its height had four fashion clients amongst other consumer accounts. Like the other interviewees summarised herein, J.d.P. was insistent concerning the importance of the relationship between the press and PR practitioners. For instance, J.d.P. suggested that neither industry could exist in its current state without the other, but did note that despite this importance, some journalists continue to research their own stories.

As to what she regarded the most distinctive function of consumer/fashion PR, J.d.P. suggested that it was most important to remain fully aware of what was transpiring in the industry and communicate with the company's clients to ensure that their message is being received and understood in the manner in which it is intended. Speed was also again cited as being essential to the process. In addition, J.d.P. made a notable observation concerning why fashion coverage is almost always positive and non-critical: "Fashion holds a unique position within lifestyle journalism and as opposed to for example food journalism there is very little point in writing about non trends."

Concerning the issues of the importance of advertising in relation to PR, J.d.P. agreed that it was very important, with magazines being especially important because they are guided by advertising content. According to J.d.P., advertisers who pay for the back and inside front covers are given priority in a given issue and are provided with a certain number of column inches of free editorial space as well. These advertisers also enjoy some level of control over what is reported about their products. This makes magazines an especially important print media outlet for the fashion industry compared to the newspapers because they have a shorter lifespan and "advertising happens on a lesser scale. They come from much more of a news angle." Nevertheless, the introduction of magazine-like newspaper supplements, J.d.P. suggested, has provided yet another avenue for fashion advertisers seeking to target a specific market because these supplements received extra attention to the creation of their front covers to provide them with a lifespan comparable or close to magazines. According to J.d.P., "Within those supplements again priority is given to main

advertisers, but a great deal is also initiated by PR alone. She suggests that without the vast amount of fashion companies and their use of PR these supplements would not exist.

Concerning which techniques she regarded as being most essential for a successful consumer fashion PR campaign, J.d.P. stated that the techniques depended on the target market: “A PR campaign for Vogue is very different to a campaign for Grazia Magazine and it is important to have their readers in mind.”

In addition, J.d.P. was emphatic concerning the importance of celebrity endorsements to the process and noted that fashion journalists and members of the fashion press are drawn to media events if they know that a celebrity will be in attendance, and pointed out that pictures of such events that contain celebrities wearing fashion designs are more popular among readers today. This close connection between a celebrity and a given brand, though, can backfire if celebrities become involved in acts that destroy their celebrity. According to this industry professional this did not matter so much in the case of Kate Moss when caught on camera whilst taking cocaine and pointing out Moss’ almost untouchable “iconographic” status.

Finally, J.d.P. pointed out the importance of keeping ahead of fashion trends as well as maintaining close contacts within the fashion press and reported that a constant communication flow is essential.



- **Interview with Julian Vogel (J.V.) of Modus Publicity**

**(Interview Date 6th June 2007)**

J.V. stated that Modus Publicity is the largest fashion PR company in the UK, employing 55 people with 35 of these working on fashion accounts for 17 different fashion PR clients. This interviewee reported that the occupational backgrounds of the fashion PR staff at Modus Publicity were diverse, but emphasised that a positive attitude was the most important quality they looked for when seeking new employees. Although it is useful for the company's fashion media representatives to have some existing contacts when they come to work for Modus Publicity, J.V. also said it is possible and commonplace for people to acquire these from the "bottom up" by working their way up through the organisational hierarchy and establishing these valuable contacts as they progress. Whatever their origins and backgrounds, J.V. also pointed out that all staff members working for fashion clients are required to thoroughly understand how this company functions to be effective.

J.V. further emphasised the importance of the company's relationship with the press and stressed the need for responsiveness in a time-oriented industry, but also noted that it was important to fine-tune their efforts according to the individual journalist involved. For example, J.V. stated, "There are one or two journalists who tend to prefer doing their own research and use PR agencies as little as possible. "I recall a party we did ages ago in a fashion store in Notting Hill when it was just about to become an up and coming part of town. We invited journalists from a cross section of media. At a certain point I noticed Suzie Menkes taking pictures from outside the window. She has always researched her own articles and is a highly respected journalist within her field."

As to the most distinctive function of fashion PR, J.V. stated that his philosophy was to be as responsive to whatever journalists needed from the company as possible. Flexibility in this area was also deemed an essential ingredient for success: “We offer a service to them and to our clients so it is our main priority to deliver the goods, be it via showroom visits, by lending product, managing and holding events or by being the UK representatives at the respective fashion weeks,” he stated. An interesting empirical observation made by J.V. concerned why consumer fashion coverage is typically positive and uncritical, and pointed to the highly subjective nature of what is covered in the fashion media. This aspect of the industry was particularly important in terms of newspaper coverage, he said, and emphasised that, “This sometimes happens especially within newspapers which have much more of a news angle than magazines after fashion week shows. Newspaper press coverage after a fashion week show can make or break a designer.” However he further stated that as far as fashion magazines and even newspaper supplements are concerned “there is very little point in reporting about non-trends, which makes fashion different to any other area within journalism where reporting failure is equally newsworthy”.

J.V. also pointed to the priority provided to advertisers by the monthlies and weeklies and increasingly newspaper fashion supplements, and indicated these represented important tools in the public relation professional’s repertoire of promotional tools. He further notes that giving an exclusive to a top end magazine or newspaper can be one of the most effective PR tools, but points out that this mainly applies to well established products or designers. He explains that “Sienna and Savannah Miller’s 28/12 Collection has been so desperately awaited that we gave the exclusive to Vogue, which is the most highly regarded

fashion magazine in the world. Only a month later did we have a launch party for all the other journalists to come and view the collection.”

J.V. further indicated that there were many other ways of attracting attention for the appropriate media representatives, but also emphasised the need for speed: “We now mainly send e-releases as opposed to ordinary press releases by post. Usually we do an audit before we take on clients and discuss with them in great detail which form of PR activities would be most effective for them.” The approximate time-span from the start of a PR campaign to the first results in terms of press coverage also depends on the client and the publication involved, noting that magazines require more lead time than newspapers. Modus Publicity also offers the press visits to the company showroom and they conduct press open days twice a year so media representatives will have an opportunity to see the latest collections of the clients they represent amongst other treats such as hair dressing as well as beauty and styling advice.

As to the value of celebrity endorsements, J.V. was also emphatic concerning the importance in terms of getting more attention from the fashion press and agreed with his industry counterparts concerning their value to a given fashion line, and cited Kate Moss as a good example of this value added quality.

- **Interview with Clodagh Norton (C.N.). Freelance Fashion Writer**  
**(Interview Date 09.12.2005)**

Some valuable insights emerged from this interview representing the press side of the industry. The most poignant remarks concerned the reciprocal nature of the fashion industry and fashion press, with the need for both to remain responsive to the needs of the other in a mutually advantageous manner. For instance, in response to the question, “How important is the relationship between the press and PR?,” C.N. stated that, “It is very much a two way relationship, the press relied on PRs for information and of course if there wasn’t as much media especially print media interest, PR would not be in existence to such an extent. – To sum this up, one very much relies on the other.”

As to what she considered to be the most distinctive function of consumer/fashion PR, C.N. suggested that generating interest among press represented the most important, keeping the fashion media informed of the latest trends and developments was an integral part of covering the fashion industry today.

This fashion editor and writer also emphasised the importance of establishing and maintaining close contacts in the industry and noted that she collaborated with her contacts on a daily basis. C.N. also reported being feted on a regular basis, but also indicated this was not a one-way street with people skills and tact representing valuable tools in her profession: “I totally rely on the help of fashion PRs. When I am writing a lengthy feature I try and meet up with them as well as borrow product. I speak to PRs on a daily basis. They usually telephone me anyway with information about new launches and product up-

dates; they also spoil me with goodies. When I need information quickly I tend to telephone them or request an e-release or if I need an interview with a designer it is through the PRs that I get to see them. Equally I need their assistance when it comes to the use of visuals. Often we do not have the time or the budget for a photo-shoot so I get images through them and use them in the magazine or newspaper I write for.”

According to C.N., time is of the absolute essence for the fashion press and the faster PR professionals are able to provide her with the information she needs, the more likely it will be that they receive the coverage they desire. In this regard, C.N. stated, “This is usually the biggest problem in the publishing industry – we need things yesterday. I appreciate immediate access to accurate information and also in terms of borrowing product. It gets stressful if you are in need of a certain fashion item which is used by ten other publications at the same time.”

As to the reasons for fashion coverage generally being of a positive and non-critical nature, C.N. agreed with her counterparts in the fashion PR industry that the media represents a powerful gatekeeper concerning what information actually reaches the consuming public, with this function being a highly subjective one. “I suppose there is not much point in writing in a negative style about something in a fashion article,” C.N. stated. “If we do not like a trend or a new style we just don’t feature it. We tend to shoot product that we know our readers will identify with or sometimes we run a feature whereby we go out and ask people on the street what they think of certain trends.”

Finally, confirming both the importance of celebrity endorsements in the fashion industry and their potential adverse impact on lifestyle behaviours, C.N. stated that, “Images with famous people wearing beautiful clothes tend to sell more magazines. Fashion orientated people have a natural longing to look good and through celebrity endorsement they aspire to look just like those famous people – it works.”

## **6.6. Summary of Interviews**

Although a detailed analysis and discussion of the above interviews as well as others is provided in the following chapter, it is important to note that the interviews have proved a very successful method of data collection providing direct access to insider information. Although the sample was chosen to be balanced and non biased thus including interviewees from both sides, PR and press, it was interesting to learn that all interviewees pointed in the same direction. They were largely confirming that fashion journalism depends heavily on PR with time and budget constraints as the prime reason. Furthermore they outlined the interesting fact that in the particular context of fashion, the rule of ‘bad news is good news’ does not apply, unless the coverage revolves around Fashion Week, which seems to be the only time journalists also take a negative angle.

## **6.7. Participant Observation**

Outlined below are the overall findings of the participant observation part of the research. A London based consumer PR agency has been visited six times, once every month, from May 2005 to October 2005. Hand written notes were taken during the visits and a special coding schedule was developed for data evaluation. The observations are outlined and discussed in this section with some personal key observations presented in bullet point format. The most notable part of this research has been the direct insight into the way fashion PR is dealt with within an agency environment. Listed below are the main functions as well as the structure of staff within this particular company.

### **Structure of Staff in Sample PR Agency**

1 Managing Director (in this case the owner)
4 Account Director (s)
4 Account Manager (s)
6 Account Executives
1 Dispatch Manager
1 Receptionist
1 PA to the Managing Director
2 Work Experience People helping on a cross section of accounts

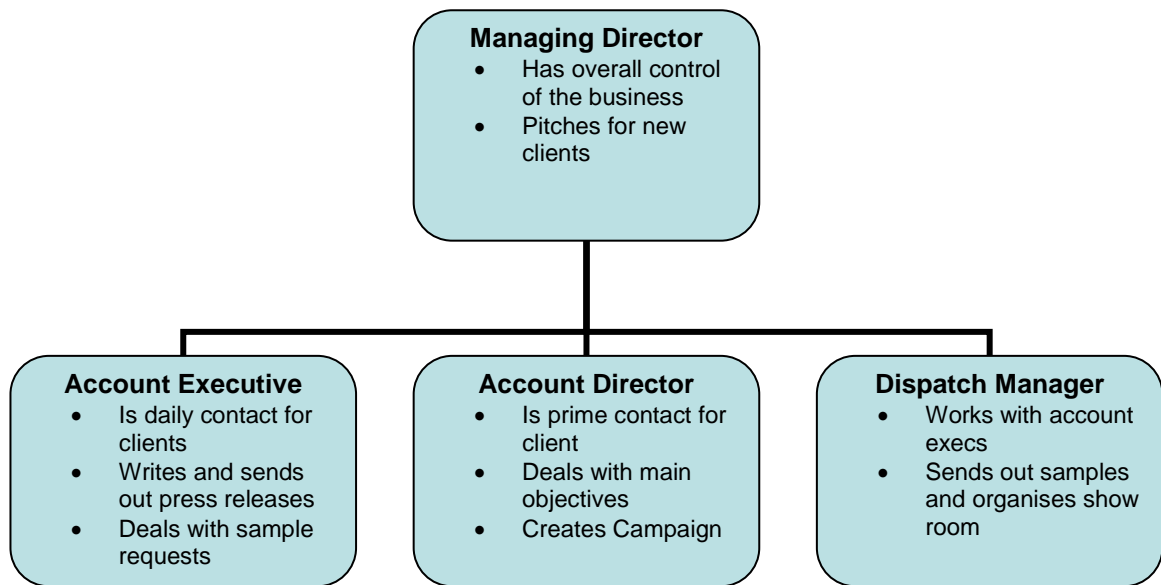
The Managing Director has overall control of the business. She pitches for and wins new accounts/ clients which are then distributed towards the relevant departments within the agency. The sample agency which specialises in consumer PR has various divisions in the lifestyle sector, with fashion being one of them. Fashion is often just a department within a consumer PR agency, though PR agencies specialising only in fashion also exist.

Once a client is won, the Account Director takes over and communicates with the client directly to find out their main goals and objectives. Following this a tailored PR programme is created which is usually achieved through a brain storming meeting with the team of account managers and account executives.

During these meetings an effective media strategy, a plan of action entailing the detailed approach towards appropriate media and journalists, is laid out. The overall objective of this strategy is getting the client as much press coverage as possible. A PR programme is designed for a certain amount of time. This particular sample agency, takes on clients for no less than six months, thus the initial programme is put together for that length of time. Prior to launching a fashion PR campaign a brand audit is carried out in order to understand the respective brand, the way it is perceived by the consumer and thus to establish the PR techniques that may be required in order to represent it to the relevant media. Often questionnaires are being used as part of audience research as well as one-to-one interviews. The figure below presents the overall functions of staff within a fashion PR agency.



**Figure 2:**      **Structure of Sample PR Agency**



Source: Figure based on own research data.

A fashion PR campaign is not a complicated structure requiring vast managerial understanding. It is, unlike the theorised models of strategic PR planning as suggested by Weintraub et al (2001), Grunig and Hunt (1984) or Center and Jackson (2003), but rather as Philip Henslow (2001) describes it, a basic 'strategy' and within it the individual events and PR activities are the 'tactics'. Obviously the array of new channels which are available through effective use of the internet, including viral marketing and blogs open up further opportunities of PR strategies. Overall it can be said that the structure of a fashion PR programme is in line with Frank Jefkins' 'six-point method' outlined below (Jefkins, 1995, p.99).

**Table 19:      Six Point Method as Suggested by Jefkins**

1.
2. Appreciation of the Situation
3. Definition of Objectives
4. Definition of the publics
5. Selection of the Media
6. Budgets
7. Assessment of Results

Source: Frank Jefkins (1995, p.99)

PR consultants within this consumer PR agency seemed mainly concerned about satisfying their clients by ensuring press coverage for their products. The agency gets paid by the month and in return has to reach a target of pages within the national press<sup>22</sup>.

The sample agency held a meeting attended by all staff every Monday morning during which the achievements of the previous week as well as the strategies and forthcoming events for the week ahead were discussed. Minutes were taken and every member of staff was presented with a copy afterwards. The day-to-day business of this particular agency consisted of frequent telephone conversations between the account manager, the client and the press as well as the ongoing loan of samples to journalists and stylists for photographic shoots.

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<sup>22</sup> Some agencies such as Weber Shandwick and Hill & Knowlton who work on a global scale guarantee a certain quantity of coverage within the national and international press.

The author was able to observe the launch of a new fashion designer and her collection. In line with McRobbie's (1998) claims regarding the frequent change of jobs within the fashion industry this designer had made a career as a stylist prior to creating a fashion collection. Following the above mentioned audit and positioning of this new designer within the market a launch campaign was planned and put into place. First the target press was decided upon and an initial press release was sent out informing journalists about the new client. This was done via regular mail as well as by email (e-release) depending on the lead times of the publication. For this launch only the top end magazines and broadsheets were chosen as the collection was intended for the luxury fashion market.

Within that first release the collection was introduced featuring an exclusive photograph as well as a cashmere scarf for the most relevant editors as a gift. Following this release an exclusive launch party was planned and personalised invitations were sent out. In combination with the designer an appropriate celebrity was chosen for the promotion of the collection who was also to attend the launch. When enquiring about the importance of this PR technique the author was told that the celebrity would possess the 'pulling power' of getting the right journalists to attend the launch. Prior to the event however certain press were invited for a private view held in an exclusive London hotel to maintain exclusivity. This was attended by three magazine editors and four newspaper journalists. The launch was held at a top London venue and organised by one of the most prestigious event planners. It was attended by a large number of journalists as well as celebrities who were invited either personally through prior contacts or via their agents to whom the agency also had links.

The most significant finding emerging from this part of the research has been the constant effort of establishing and maintaining contacts. Following the event another press release was sent out and interviews with the designer were arranged. The author learnt that the collection has since been launched in the US.

The author further learnt that depending on a client's budget the launch of a new product is sometimes hyped by a specially designed 'teaser campaign'. This teaser campaign can happen long before the launch of the actual product or fashion collection in order to create a pre buzz. This can entail anything from samples being sent out to trips away.

It is usually the account executive who has to follow up the initial and following press releases by telephoning journalists to make sure they have received them and whether they are interested in viewing the collection or require further information. Equally if an invitation for a launch or event has gone out, these have to be followed up as well. The author learnt that fashion PR consultants are not relying on press replying to their efforts but rather presenting everything to them and frequently reminding them about their clients' products.

The author further learnt that once a client has agreed and signed the contract a fashion sample collection is delivered to the PR agency for their disposal. As this agency had a special show-room in which the collections were displayed, it was possible to invite journalists for private viewings. However it appeared as though mostly samples were sent out to journalists, stylists and photographers who then took them to photographic shoots. Often samples were lent to celebrities in the hope of receiving coverage through them.

- **Key Personal Points Identified during Participant-Observation**

Presented here below are some key observations made during this part of the research. It is important to note that whilst carrying out this research the main objective was to find evidence supporting the original hypothesis. The points below are transferred verbatim from the notes taken during the active part of the research.

1. From an observer's point of view nothing seems to have changed since the author worked in the fashion PR industry in 2000.
2. At times there were doubts as to how useful Participant Observation might be with regards to this project as the author was not a team member but merely an observer..

- **General Points Observed**

1. Staff not particularly trained in PR or with relevant academic backgrounds.
2. Most important fact for employment within fashion PR is contacts, positive can-do attitude and flexibility in terms of using own initiative and work long hours.
3. Most employees started with un-paid work experience working in the sample room, cutting out press coverage, stuffing envelopes, chasing journalists for samples or replies for launches etc. – they were working their way up within the agency.
4. Fashion PR is more about people than about academic foundation.
5. Fashion companies who spend money on advertising within magazines and newspapers (esp. supplements) are getting more coverage than those that don't spend money on advertising.
6. There are obvious trends within print media fashion coverage with press picking up

on certain products and coverage about the same product appears throughout the whole print media spectrum including newspaper and magazines.

7. Structure of PR agencies is the same on different levels. It is mainly divided into:

Account Director

Account Manager

Account Executive

Show room attendants

Work experience people helping on various levels but mainly in the fashion showroom.

8. Achieving press coverage seems significantly easier if there is already a relationship between the PR executive and the relevant journalist.
9. A typical day of a PR executive within a fashion PR agency consists of daily monitoring of current press articles and fashion features, followed by 'call-rounds' to all relevant fashion editors and journalists to find out what stories they work on and whether they would be interested in featuring any of the agency's client's products for any of the up-coming stories. Press releases (or the more recent e-releases) are sent on a regular basis and followed up by phone calls. Showroom appointments are booked for press to view the current collections.
10. It seems an inter-dependable relationship for both press and PR people as both seem to be heavily relying on the other.
11. A vast amount of fashion press coverage are in fact copied releases.
12. Very busy and often tense work environment.
13. The agency was involved in every process beginning with the press release to the

final press event. Free promotional gifts are sent on a regular basis.

14. Constant daily contact is maintained with the client they represent.
15. Every month a valuation report is produced and presented to the client. This includes an approximate estimation regarding the value the achieved press coverage has in comparison to advertising space.
16. Newspapers are scanned for fashion coverage every day.
17. Magazines are scanned for coverage the day they come out.
18. Staff meetings and brainstorming sessions are held once a week.
19. A brand audit is carried out every time a new client is taken on
20. There is a repetitiveness of journalists they approach and vice versa – contacts do seem vital.
21. The stress levels appear to be high if a certain fashion item is wanted by more than one journalist or stylist. There are definitely popular/favoured items within every fashion collection.
22. There is a clear hierarchy of magazines and newspapers - some are considered more important than others. It has been confirmed that Vogue is the most important fashion magazine and instant credibility is given to the respectable fashion item if it is featured within it.
23. Newspapers are of importance in their campaigns though magazines due to their longer life span seem to feature higher.
24. There was a notion of treating journalists of the higher regarded magazines and newspapers with more care (i.e. more special treatment in terms of giving freebies and instant access to the showroom etc.).

25. PR campaigns differ from product to product and depending on the actual fashion item the relevant media was targeted. High end fashion was promoted to mainly high end magazines and newspapers and high street low end fashion was promoted to tabloids and low end magazines.
26. Office atmosphere got very tense when deadlines had to be met.
27. Overtime was spent in the office when events were planned and organised.
28. Special attention was paid towards new media and research into new ways of promoting their clients was underway.

## **6.8. Summary**

The combination of research methods both qualitative as well as quantitative has been an exhaustive and beneficial way of obtaining data for this particular research enquiry. Following on from the literature review which established that very little academic writing on the subject of fashion PR is in existence, the content analysis was the first step in order to establish the actual extent of fashion coverage within UK newspapers. Those six months of newspaper evaluation have given the author an initial idea of the actual quantity of coverage and thus formed a substantial basis from where to construct and create interviews.

It was also vital with regards to the choice of interviewees. The group of interviewees had been well thought out from the outset as it had to cover every aspect of the fashion PR industry, as well as including members of the fashion press so not to have a bias sample. The semi structured form of interviewing has provided a flexible method within which



interviewees were able to answer more on their own terms than had it been a completely structured interview. It proved to be a successful method uncovering a vast spectrum of information, most of which led towards the notion that the original hypothesis of this study was correct; however it still needed confirmation in the form of one other method.

Participant observation was chosen in order to understand the environment of fashion PR and the way the industry manages to gain media attention on a daily basis. This part of the research formed the deciding verification of the original hypothesis as the author was able to establish who depended on whom and identified PR as the first line of contact for the fashion press. It also underlined the afore mentioned vast PR efforts that go into pleasing the press, mostly through celebrity endorsement and industry contacts, which as confirmed by the interviews and highlighted by the participant observation are the crucial ingredients of fashion PR. Most employees obtained their jobs purely on their base of contacts rather than qualifications, another interesting point to arise from this part of the research. A detailed analysis of the obtained research data is provided in the following Chapter: 7.

## **Chapter 7: Research Findings**

### **7.1. Introduction**

This chapter is a detailed discussion of the research findings with special consideration to fashion PR's role towards fashion coverage within UK newspapers. It is an evaluation of the content analysis results in context with the interviews, as well as the participant observation and furthermore comparing the author's own experiences when involved in the fashion PR industry and thus establishing the direct relation between fashion PR and fashion journalism. This chapter draws further attention to the specific techniques applied by the fashion PR industry in order to ensure print media coverage with special regards to celebrity endorsement, channeling and exclusivity, fashion photography as well as probing the non critical nature of fashion coverage and the emergence of a special fashion language.

### **7.2. Fashion PR's Direct Input into Fashion Newspaper Coverage**

Through tracing PR material relevant and with a direct reference to the identified fashion coverage the level at which fashion PR is involved in the process as well as in the end result has been clearly established. Even more than other forms of journalism the fashion press relies and depends heavily on 'being fed' by the fashion PR industry. Reporting and investigative journalism within fashion seems non-existent. However whenever this particular point was mentioned to the interviewees one journalist's name kept coming up as opposing this notion. Suzy Menkes, fashion editor of the International Herald Tribune and formerly of The Times, is known as the one fashion journalist who as Mark Tungate puts it: "is not afraid of crossing swords with the designers" (Tungate, 2005, p.129). This is in line

with Julian Vogel's views (interview notes 6<sup>th</sup> June 2007) who regards her as one of the few fashion journalists researching their own stories. Fashion expert and BA Fashion Design Course Director at The University of Westminster Andrew Groves, when asked in an email interview for the purpose of this study (19<sup>th</sup> November 2007) about the existence of fashion journalism also refers to Suzy Menkes as being "alive and well and out there".

At this point it is worth noting that although a journalist may write his or her own story the run up to it was most likely manufactured by PR efforts. This could have been via way of press releases, word of mouth campaigns, teaser campaigns, (launch) parties, other press events or possibly a special freebee/gift. It is also important to note that some PR efforts are impossible to track down as they may have just been in conversation between PR consultants and journalists on a one-to-one occasion or even in private out of work environments which again points to the interwoven nature of the industry.

However according to the fashion journalists and stylists interviewed for this study the common claim was that the press are inundated with fashion giveaways and PR material which they receive in various formats on a daily basis. The same was said for invitations to parties, lunches, breakfasts, special fashion shows, open-days even trips away. In this regard Tungate (2005, p.126) quotes a young fashion PR executive who attended a talk hosted by a leading UK fashion journalist explaining what the PR industry should be doing in order to best convince the fashion press to write about their brands: "If you must give us free gifts, give us vouchers instead."

Fashion journalists are spoilt in every aspect by the fashion PR industry in order to get the relevant product into their limited number of fashion pages. This brings up the next emergent finding which is the apparent non-critical nature of fashion coverage. This fact arguably makes the fashion PR industry a very safe field as the risk of achieving damaging coverage seems minimal. Thus the efforts focus on quantity as opposed to quality and getting any coverage at all. However the initial question that arises is whether this non-criticalness is due to advertising or PR. When asked about this particular point in the interviews the overall answer was that there would be little point in reporting about non-trends so rather not mention them at all and write about another collection, piece or designer instead. Golorskhi (in Tungate, 2005 p.126) points out that: “The connection between fashion brands and the media is based on relationships, and PR people work very hard to stimulate friendships with journalists. It is difficult to write nasty things about your friends.” This quote is very much in line with the observations made during the participant observation and with the author’s prior experiences.

Fashion PR executives allocate a large part of their time and efforts into establishing and maintaining press contacts. This is done via various ways and expands into their private lives as well. Apart from the obvious invitations to fashion events, invitations to luncheons or dinner parties, charity activities as well as special committees are popular means of getting people together and provide networking opportunities.

Janine Roxborough Bunce of JRB Associates ran the Fashion Group International (FGI) for a number of years. This exclusive group made up of fashion journalists, fashion PR

executives, designers and other fashion experts met once every month in a different fashionable location around London for a talk/lecture held by one of their members. This was followed by a drinks reception providing the perfect background for networking purposes. At times the events were crossing the boundaries into other fashion related areas such as health and beauty.

Press open days are another way of assembling a large number of journalists and informing them about latest clients and products. Fashion PR agencies hold press open days twice a year according to the arrival of the Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter collections. During the interviews the author learnt that depending on the type of agency and the clients they represent the press decide as to whether it is 'worth going'. Modus Publicity holds a very exclusive press open day which includes beauty treatments, generous gifts (goody bags) and personalised tours of their show rooms. The fashion press is known to be fond of the Modus' press open days and considerable coverage is achieved in their aftermath. When asked about how he 'keeps fashion journalists happy', Julian Vogel replies that being efficient and providing press with what they want instantly is of vital importance. "If a fashion journalist contacts the office for a particular item it is our utmost aim to provide this as soon as possible." The fashion press works on tight schedules and often extra stories and items are squeezed into a magazine issue without prior notice. In these instances the PR agency has to respond promptly. A common phrase observed during the participant observation has been: "The journalist wants it yesterday!" Modus Publicity has a very large and diverse client base which ranges from top end designer brands to street labels and young up and coming designers. This results in the fact that they converse with a great

number of journalists from a variety of publications. They are also one of the longest established fashion PR agencies in London with nearly 20 years in the business.

### **7.3. PR Techniques**

Outlined in Table 20 below are the identified techniques applied by fashion PR consultants for the purpose of achieving coverage within the print media. This study has shown that fashion PR efforts are vast and often difficult to pinpoint as a large amount of the industry lives of contacts. Listed overleaf are the detected techniques with the most prominent and frequently ones used discussed in points 7.4. to 7.8.

**Table 20:**

**PR Techniques identified during the Course of Research**

Networking
Constant supplying of press information (press packs, press releases, e-releases, photographs)
Extensive press gifts and goody bags
Celebrity endorsement
Parties and Events/ generous hospitality
Exclusives
Sponsorship
Word of mouth
Charity events and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)
Launches
Competitions
Teaser Campaigns
Interviews (with designers etc.)
Surveys

Source: Table based on own research data.

#### **7.4. Exclusivity and the Channeling of PR Information**

One safe way of ensuring press coverage and keeping some sort of control is giving exclusivity to certain publications. These are usually the high profile glossy magazines with Vogue being one of the main players. Julian Vogel recalls the launch of Sienna and Savannah Miller's fashion label 28/12. Although largely kept quiet due to Sienna Miller's celebrity and almost iconic fashion status this event had been ardently awaited by the fashion press. When Modus Publicity was appointed to represent the new label the requests from the fashion press were infinite. "The only way we could keep control of this demand was by giving an exclusive to Vogue", Vogel explains.

This highlights once more where the power and the dependencies lie. Fashion journalists did not go out in the search of a news story but merely telephoned the PR agency and there is no under-cover reporting in fashion journalism. Stories involving fashion related topics in the public debate such as sweat shops and child labour tend to be covered by news journalists and not the fashion press.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the fashion press largely forms its own enclave in the world of journalism. Unless reporting revolves around financial issues of a large fashion house or company, there is no cross-over with the news desk. This raises the question as to where the career aspirations of a fashion journalist may lie. Unlike news journalism where the main objective tends to be the uncovering of a sensational story that brings them closer to the position of editor in chief, this hierarchy does not exist within fashion journalism and as mentioned in the previous chapter the 'bad news is good news' role does not apply within



fashion reporting. However in this regard it is worth noting that newspaper fashion editors such as Hilary Alexander, Ollie Picton-Jones, Susannah Frankel and Lisa Armstrong have been holding their positions for over a decade. As identified by McRobbie (1996) and verified by this research it is common for a fashion journalist to change direction and become a fashion PR executive, a stylist, go freelance or do a combination of things.

The next question that arises is the way PR material is processed by the fashion press. Arguably if all publications are provided with the same material and if the hypothesis of this thesis is correct then the coverage should be exactly the same throughout the whole spectrum of newspapers and magazines. This however is not the case and as Janine du Plessis explains, different publications are targeted in different ways. Depending on the relevance of the publication to the given fashion line or product the PR efforts vary. For example when the 1960s cult label BIBA was re-launched for the third time in the UK a conscious effort was made by Freud PR in supplying only the top end glossy magazines and the broadsheets with press information and visuals. This was in regard to their target consumer and the exclusive outlets they had chosen to sell BIBA in, such as Harrods and luxury fashion store Browns. When BIBA was launched for the second time back in 1996 the press information was not channeled and the target audience was a less exclusive one. BIBA was covered by teenage magazines, tabloids as well as high profile fashion magazines such as Elle. Though BIBA was covered frequently in the fashion pages mainly because of its cult status the lack of the quality of the actual garments meant that even large amounts of press coverage could not save the label from bankruptcy. Thus product positioning, timing with the current trends is of vital importance.

As per the author's observations within the fashion PR industry it was common practice to have different types of press folders containing variations of information suitable for different target publications. For example the top end glossy magazines such as Vogue, Elle and Tatler were given an extensive folder containing visuals, press releases, a CD, as well as a free gift. The same folders were supplied to the broadsheet newspapers such as The Daily Telegraph, The Times, The Independent and the FT. Less prestigious publications were sent one press release and a limited amount of visuals in a less expensive folder. Also if one particular item held in the PR showroom was in high demand it was usually the more prestigious titles that were given access to it.

In conclusion the fashion industry and the PR industry share some common goals. There is a cyclical nature in the way fashions are developed and promoted between the two. For example, by singling out one fashion trend over another, the fashion PR industry is capable of exerting enormous influence on the marketplace by virtue of keeping what they deem to be the most important and timely trends in front of their publics. Because of the print media representing a highly dynamic and competitive industry that depends on timely reporting of events and trends in the first place, the fashion PR industry provides the first line of offense for fashion designers and others to promote their products and gain vital attention from the targeted market. In fact, this point was one of the more glaring issues to emerge from both the review of the literature as well as the active research phase of the study.

### **7.5. Advertorial & Free Editorial Space**

A recurring aspect throughout the research for this thesis has been the use of free editorial space within the fashion context. All UK newspapers carry a certain amount of column inches that is specifically reserved for fashion coverage. As the fashion department is largely independent of the news desk it is down to the fashion director or fashion editor to decide in which format to allocate this space. PR companies are well aware of this fact and try to use it to their advantage. However, fashion companies with significant advertising budgets spending large amounts on advertisements on a regular basis are generally guaranteed some of this free space. This again indicates the partiality that exists within fashion reporting. PR companies representing large fashion houses usually work in collaboration with the advertising team in order to create stories around the relevant campaign. Although the control of the editorial is ultimately within the hands of the fashion editor or fashion director, if a company spends large sums on advertising the PR representative usually gets a pre-view of the editorial or at least is allowed a certain say.

Free editorial space historically used to be unique to fashion (Davies, interview notes 2008) however more recently it has also spread to other lifestyle areas such as travel, food, beauty and motoring. Yet fashion accumulates the highest number of advertisers which is of vast economical importance to the publishers (Hastings, 2002) and thus is given a considerate amount on a daily basis.

Newspaper supplements arguably are an evolution of free editorial space, however these magazine style publications which are part of the weekend editions of most UK newspapers

are thoroughly advertising led and indeed often have their own editorial fashion team that works separately to that of the actual newspaper. Lead times for newspaper supplements are longer than those for newspapers and their content is even more focused on the visual.

Free editorial space within news journalism does not exist (Davies, Interview notes 2008). Arguably the main aspiration within news journalism is to break a major story and make front page news. However within fashion journalism this ambition does not seem to exist, indeed if a certain garment gets front page coverage it is arguably more of a success story for the PR who has released the material than it is for the journalist. This particular phenomenon rises the question as to where the career aspirations of a fashion journalist lie. Whilst news journalists are arguably on a constant search for news breaking stories that will award them with recognition and possibly the post of editor in the end, fashion editors have no such pressure. Indeed one of the distinctive characteristics within fashion journalism is that editors often change sides and become PR practitioners. This is largely due to the previously mentioned small closed world of fashion which relies heavily and foremost on contacts and a strong network.

A further frequently used means of achieving coverage particularly for smaller and lesser known companies is advertorial, which is a hybrid between advertising and editorial. Advertorial is paid for coverage but is disguised as editorial. Advertorials are designed to look like articles but as most UK newspapers do not accept advertisements that look exactly like editorial, the differences are usually subtle, and disclaimers such as the word "advertisement" may or may not appear. Sometimes euphemisms describing the advertorial

as a "special promotional feature" or "special advertising section" are used. The tone of the advertorials is usually closer to that of a press release than that of an objective news story. Advertorials can also be printed and presented as an entire newspaper section, inserted the same way within a newspaper and within fashion often include product shots or entire photo shoots using models as well as text.

Many newspapers and magazines assign staff writers or freelancers to write advertorials, usually without a byline credit. However Hargreaves (2002) notes that "many newspapers and magazines, including some of the most respectable ones, publish advertorials, often written by the same journalists who write other news and features." This is also the case within fashion. As most fashion editors on the large national newspapers enjoy a certain degree of celebrity they are regarded as a credible source of information and thus make advertorials a very worthwhile option for fashion companies. Furthermore the major difference between regular editorial and advertorial is that clients usually have content approval of advertorials, which is not the case with regular editorial.

During the course of research the author has learnt that PR professionals are in favour of advertorials particularly for new brands as a way of introducing them into the media sphere. It is important to note that although advertorial is paid for coverage it is usually significantly cheaper than traditional advertising and interestingly the major fashion houses such as Chanel, Ralph Lauren, Gucci, Prada etc do not seem to use advertorial at all,

arguably they are in a position of power over the fashion press due to the large amounts of advertising they spend in the first place.

## **7.6. The Celebrity Connection**

One of the most significant findings emerging throughout the course of this research has been the inextricable connection between fashion PR, the fashion press and celebrities. It is known among fashion circles that the right celebrity can be the sole reason for the success of a fashion brand. Originally the top models or super models as they were called were a phenomenon of the 1990s. They were the gatekeepers of the fashion pages (Gross, 1999) however in recent years the power of celebrity has largely replaced them. It is therefore that the fashion PR industry spends vast efforts on appointing celebrity endorsers.

This study has found that fashion continually made front page news if worn by a celebrity. Furthermore there are certain celebrities who are frequently mentioned in connection with fashion, the most prominent ones being top model Kate Moss, the actress Sienna Miller, singer Victoria Beckham and actress Sarah Jessica Parker whose role as fashion obsessed columnist Carry Bradshaw in the TV series 'Sex and the City' has given her almost iconic fashion status. The most frequently mentioned celebrities along with the number of mentions identified during the content analysis for the purpose of this study are listed in Table 21.

**Table: 21**

**Ten Most Frequently Mentioned Celebrities and Number of Mentions**

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Kylie Minogue	47
Gwyneth Paltrow	42
Scarlett Johansson	41
Jennifer Aniston	39
Sienna Miller	37
Kate Moss	35
Victoria Beckham	32
Liz Hurley	30
Nicole Kidman	29
Madonna	27

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Source: Table based on own data retrieved through content analysis 2003/4

Despite the content analysis having taken place in 2004 it is important to note that those women are still very much present in the fashion pages today. The question arises as to what extent the PR industry might be responsible for this. In a recent interview with PR director Erica Bolton of 'Bolton & Quinn' the author was told that once a celebrity is established it is very much in the PR industry's interest to keep their profiles high. Nevertheless a further notable point which emerged throughout the course of research has

been the creation of new celebrities for the purpose of fashion via way of reality TV shows such as 'Big Brother' or 'Love Island'.

There are certain celebrities that suit certain brands and the matching of the right celebrity to the right fashion brand is of vital importance to the PR industry. This finding is in line with McCracken's Match-up Hypothesis (1989). According to one interviewee the run up to the Academy Awards and other high profile red carpet events are crucial times for PR representatives as their efforts are entirely focused on getting the right celebrity to wear their clients' products. Actresses are sent rails of free gowns in the hope that one of them may be picked and worn on the red carpet, photographed by the numerous photographers and ultimately end up in the fashion pages. Even newcomers are included in this effort as a dress can make or break a new actress. The success of model/actress Liz Hurley is largely attributed to the Versace safety-pin dress she wore for the UK premier of the film 'Four Weddings and a Funeral'.



**Photograph 1:**

**Liz Hurley in Versace Pin Dress, Premier of Four Weddings and a Funeral, 1994**



Source: [www.look.co.uk/resource/mvfzngswrjib9d8nf9zh5801.jpg](http://www.look.co.uk/resource/mvfzngswrjib9d8nf9zh5801.jpg)

However the handing out of free clothes to celebrities by designers via their PR representatives is not restricted to high profile events. Sienna Miller is reported to receive car loads of freebies every week whilst Gwynneth Paltrow according to one source holds parties for her friends during which she gives away vast amounts of designer clothes which she receives from fashion PR departments.

On 16th February 2004 an image of Scarlett Johansson collecting her BAFTA award appeared on the front page of every newspaper of the sample set (with the exception of the FT). However the award and her acting abilities were only mentioned in passing, it was the Prada gown she wore that got most of the appraisal. The same can be said for British actress Emma Thompson who at the same event was celebrated for her new glamorous style wearing a dress by Maria Grachvogel and a white fur stole. Table 22 demonstrates some of the headlines identified for the coverage:

**Table 22:**

**Newspaper Headlines following Scarlett Johansson's BAFTA win wearing Prada**

• 'Scarlett a Movie Queen aged 19' – Daily Mail 16/02/04 (front page)
• 'And the Bafta for best-dressed actress goes to...' -Daily Mirror 16/02/2004 (front page)
• 'The best and the worst dressed' - Daily Mirror 16/02/2004 (front page)
• 'All the Glitz & Glamour at our biggest awards evening – Scarlett's a superstarlet aged just 19...' - Express 16/02/2004 (front page)
• 'And our red-carpet style award goes to Emma (with thanks to Nicole)' – The Independent 16/02/2004 (front page)
• 'Scarlett's Baftas' – Daily Telegraph 16/02/2004 (front page)
• No headline, just a picture of Scarlet Johansson in the Prada dress holding her BAFTA Award – The Times 16/02/2004 (front page)

Source: Own research data collected during content analysis 2004

**Photograph: 2**

**Scarlett Johansson in Prada at the 2004 BAFTA Awards, London**



Source: [http://images.google.co.uk/imgres?imgurl=http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-images/Film/Pix/gallery/2004/02/16/scarlettkim3444-toe.jpg&imgrefurl=http://film.guardian.co.uk/gall/0,8544,1149261,00.html&usg=\\_\\_rXqpH6Yx9dJuNdJok\\_29mB3vMu0=&h=254&w=127&sz=9&hl=en&start=2&um=1&tbnid=ZqNIfl2MY9XBhM:&tbnh=111&tbnw=56&prev=/images%3Fq%3DScarlett%2BJohansson%2BPrada%2BBafta%2B2004%26hl%3Den%26rlz%3D1T4TSEA\\_en-GBGB323GB323%26sa%3DN%26um%3D1](http://images.google.co.uk/imgres?imgurl=http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-images/Film/Pix/gallery/2004/02/16/scarlettkim3444-toe.jpg&imgrefurl=http://film.guardian.co.uk/gall/0,8544,1149261,00.html&usg=__rXqpH6Yx9dJuNdJok_29mB3vMu0=&h=254&w=127&sz=9&hl=en&start=2&um=1&tbnid=ZqNIfl2MY9XBhM:&tbnh=111&tbnw=56&prev=/images%3Fq%3DScarlett%2BJohansson%2BPrada%2BBafta%2B2004%26hl%3Den%26rlz%3D1T4TSEA_en-GBGB323GB323%26sa%3DN%26um%3D1)

When investigating the efforts that had gone into getting the actress to wear that particular gown the author learnt that Prada was competing against five other designers and that only by agreeing to supply the actress with a full wardrobe of Prada clothes did she agree to wear the dress on the night. It was the Milan based Prada press office that had established the original contact with the actress who has since been strongly associated with the Italian fashion house.

Further evidence that celebrity endorsement is a vital ingredient of the fashion PR and fashion press connection lies in the fact that when organising fashion events the attendance of a high brow celebrity ensures media attendance. During the participant observation it was established that the presence of a well known celebrity during the launch of the collection of an unknown designer was arguably the main reason for the large turn out of fashion press. This was confirmed during informal chats with some of the attending journalists.

Kylie Minogue was the most mentioned celebrity during the course of the content analysis, though this was prior to her breast cancer treatment the Australian singer has since re-established herself firmly on the fashion scene. Interestingly Kylie Minogue is by no means of model proportions and at 152 cm she is 23 cm below the average height of an ideal fashion endorser, yet according to one fashion PR expert Kylie's PR value is almost immeasurable in terms of advertising value. A dress photographed on the Australian singer is bound to make multiple entries into the fashion pages. Brazilian fashion label Issa partly assigns its success to Kylie favouring their floaty silk dresses and appearing in the fashion

pages of glossy magazines and newspapers. Interestingly during an informal conversation with the label's Head of sales it emerged that Issa does not have any advertising budget and draws all publicity from PR efforts surrounding celebrities.

Prior to Minogue's sold out Australian tour in 2004, The Sun, ran a campaign to "... have Kylie Minogue's rear end heritage-listed, preserved for 'posteriority' on the grounds that it's an Area of outstanding natural Beauty". The tabloid invited its readers to lobby the government to make sure Kylie's "bum remains in safe hands by turning it into a national institution"" (quoted in Ricketson, 2004, p.40). The Sun was not idle during this surefire attention-getting campaign, because the newspaper was "...no doubt still hoping, if only because the resulting story would provide another excuse to run a circulation-boosting photo of Kylie bending over." For The Sun, the heritage campaign was just another in a long line of excitable Kylie stunts, coming only a fortnight after a story that suggested Kylie had undergone a bum lift, secret cosmetic surgery to enhance her pertness and 'boost her appeal down under.' Declaring its intention to uncover the source of the lift rumour, the paper said it was 'trying to get to the bottom of the cheeky claims'" (quoted in Ricketson, 2004, p.40).

This media feeding frenzy for a celebrity's anatomy in an attempt to boost circulation was not particularly noteworthy except that just three years previously, Minogue's career had experienced some significant setbacks and many observers had written her off: "After her Impossible Princess album (re-titled Kylie Minogue for the Brits after Princess Diana's death) stiffed in the UK, she was written off by media and industry alike. Now she is

England's most beloved pop star. This major career comeback is attributed by Ricketson to a pair of inexpensive hot pants that became as infamous as the attention garnered by the star's anatomy itself: "The greatest career resurrection of recent times is most often attributed to the pair of gold leather hot pants (famously bought in a charity shop for 50 pence by stylist Will Baker) that Kylie wore in the video for her 2000 single 'Spinning Around' (Ricketson, 2004 p.40).

The reason celebrities play such a large part and have to a great extent replaced models within the fashion media (with the exception of a few including Kate Moss who has become a celebrity in her own right) is as fashion writer Clodagh Norton explains due to the fact that people are more likely to identify with celebrities than they are with models. Grace Coddington, creative director of US Vogue points out that: "There are no models on covers any more. They are actors because they are what sells...." (quoted in Tungate, 2005, p.122).

Creating media superstars that fit the specific image desired by the fashion industry can be largely attributed to PR. With reference to chapter 7.4. the PR industry has a vast interest in the maintenance and creation of celebrities as they form a prime promotional outlet. Various factors are taken into consideration when choosing the 'right' celebrity for the promotion of fashion, with physical beauty being the most prominent one. In a study into the perception of celebrities by consumers Harrison (1997) found that thin media figures in particular exert an enormous amount of influence on their female audience. The PR industry has a keen interest in fabricating celebrities that people can aspire to and while

they may not be able to “be like Kate Moss or Kylie, they can try to dress like them and emulate them which make them seem like an intimate part of their lives. According to one media analyst, this is part of an overall trend in recent years: “It's all spin, of course.... But the new line is that celebrities aren't pedestal celebrities, they're ‘friends. And the definition of celebrity,” Moore (2000, p.51) adds, like Kate herself, “is growing ever thinner”.

Most celebrities these days appoint professional stylists to advise on their choice of clothing. The above mentioned Will Baker is one of the most highly regarded stylists in the industry as well as Patricia Field whose work on the set of US series ‘Sex and the City’ has made her one of the fashion industry’s most significant opinion formers and a celebrity in her own right. The main character Carry’s style, a bohemian mix & match look combining designer clothing with charity shop finds is solely attributed to Field’s professional styling ability. Arguably part of shoe designer Manolo Blahnik (the main character’s favourite) can be attributed to Patricia Field. An article in the Daily Telegraph identified by Tungate (2005, p.122) points out that the “Fictional character of Carrie Bradshaw has had more influence on the way we dress than many of the designers could ever hope for.”

### **7.7. Fashion Week**

With regards to the correlation between fashion PR, the fashion press and celebrities it is important to examine the role of ‘Fashion Week’ and for the purpose of this study London Fashion Week in particular. The main aim of Fashion Week is for designers, both



established as well as new ones, to present their latest haute couture and ready-to-wear collections to the fashion press which ultimately turns it into a large scale PR event.

There are four consecutive weeks of 'Fashion Week' held in four different cities, starting in New York, then moving on to Milan, Paris and finishing in London. London Fashion Week is organised by The British Fashion Council, which is a non-profit making limited company financed by industry sponsors. The retail value of orders generated at each season is estimated to be in the region of £40 million and it is estimated that London Fashion Week generates over £100 million per annum for the London economy (The British Fashion Council, 2008).

The British Fashion Council states that worldwide media coverage of London Fashion Week is worth over £50m per season and the overall event sponsorship for London Fashion Week has increased threefold in the last seven years. In 2007 there were 15 shows/presentations with 50 exhibitors and about 50 catwalk shows spread over six consecutive days and 200 designers in the exhibition. Over 5,000 visitors attended the most recent London Fashion Week in September 2008 including buyers, TV & radio crews, journalists and photographers.

Fashion journalist and designer Alisa Marks in a telephone interview for this study (February 2006) confirms that the PR value of London Fashion Week is vast and explains that designers employ whole teams of PR experts in order to make their show a success with the fashion press. It is common knowledge among fashion circles that the press

coverage following a London Fashion Week show can make or break a collection and its designer. Thus the seating plan is of vast importance. According to Marks there is a clear hierarchy as to who sits where. The front row is given to the world's most influential fashion editors as well as A-list celebrities, the second row is reserved for lesser important members of the fashion press and the third row is mainly for fashion assistants. Everyone sitting or standing beyond row three is regarded as un-important in fashion circles. Marks explains that "the attendance of the right celebrity is nearly as important as the collection itself." (Telephone interview notes, February 2006)

With regards to this research London Fashion Week has emerged as the only time when fashion journalism has been of real newsworthiness. Front page coverage in the form of fashion photography was given to Fashion Week and articles/reports were also advertised on the front page (usually in the right hand corner of the front page). It is important to note that various sources agreed that London Fashion Week is in fact one large PR exercise which goes beyond the actual clothing collections and focuses just as much on the location and celebrity attendees. Alisa Marks underlines this point and points out that "these days it is hardly about the clothing but far more about the celebrities." (Telephone interview notes, February 2006)

## **7.8. Fashion Photography and Fashion PR**

Ewen (1996) in his historical perspective on PR points out the importance of images when used as tools of persuasion. With regards to this research fashion photography has emerged as the strongest component of fashion print media coverage and is thus of vital importance to the fashion PR industry.

As per the content analysis fashion photography was detected 232 times, with 125 photo shoots involving models and 107 product shoots respectively (see chapter 5 Table \_ ‘Type of Coverage’). Fashion photography is generally defined as ‘a genre of photography devoted to displaying clothing and other fashion items’ (Aidan, 2006 online)<sup>23</sup>. Although initially a commercial instrument it is important to note that according to Smedly (cited in Buzzi & Gibson, 2000, p.143) it “became superseded in the 1990s by the need to reflect wider concerns rather than just product placement.”

Fashion photography was originally a reaction against fashion illustration (Smedly cited in Buzzi & Gibson 2000:144) and advances in printing allowed the rise of fashion photography during the first decade of the 20th century. Michael Gross (1999) establishes the birth of fashion photography with the first appearance of clothing photographed on mannequins in the French fashion magazines *La Mode Pratique* and *Les Modes* and further attributes Conde Nast, who took over *Vogue* in 1909, in contributing to the beginnings of fashion photography. Special emphasis was placed on staging the shots, a process first developed by Baron Adolf de Meyer, who shot his models in natural environments and poses. *Vogue* was followed by its rival, *Harpers Bazaar*, and the two companies were leaders in the field

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<sup>23</sup> [http://www.aidan.co.uk/article\\_fashion1.htm](http://www.aidan.co.uk/article_fashion1.htm) [accessed 27th March 2007]

of fashion photography throughout the 1920s and 1930s (Aidan, 2006 online). House photographers such as Edward Steichen, Horst P. Horst and Cecil Beaton transformed the genre into an outstanding art form. Europe, and especially Germany, was for a short time the leader in fashion photography (Aidan, 2006 online)<sup>24</sup>.

As World War II approached the focus shifted to the US, where Vogue and Harper's continued their old rivalry. House photographers such as Irving Penn, Martin Munkacsi, Richard Avedon, and Louise Dahl-Wolfe would shape the look of fashion photography for the following decades. The artists abandoned their rigid forms for a much freer style. In 1936 Martin Munkacsi took the first photographs of models in sporty poses at the beach. Under the artistic direction of Alexander Brodovich, *Harper's Bazaar* quickly introduced this new style into its magazine.

Today amongst the most well known fashion photographers are Steven Meisel and Patrick Demarchelier. The most famous contemporary fashion photographer arguably is Mario Testino whose work frequently features in high profile magazines such as Vogue as well as some top end newspaper supplements.

This section argues that fashion photography forms a further significant part in the relationship between fashion PR & fashion journalism. Celebrity fashion photographer Mario Testino's career can arguably be seen as an example for that. Testino is best known for his highly polished, exotically bright advertising campaigns and his exquisitely styled photographs of the couture scene, all of which carry a deceptive air of nonchalance. Testino has photographed an array of celebrities, most famously he has taken photographs

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<sup>24</sup> [http://www.aidan.co.uk/article\\_fashion1.htm](http://www.aidan.co.uk/article_fashion1.htm) [accessed 27th March 2007]

of Madonna for the Italian designer Gianni Versace as well as photographing the late Diana, Princess of Wales for her famous Vanity Fair cover in 1997. His popularity with designers, fashion PRs and fashion editors stems as much from his professionalism and his unerring ability to take beautiful pictures which sell clothes. Testino is also credited with bringing to an end the reign of the 'uebermodel': rather than pay the exorbitant fees demanded by Linda Evangelista, Naomi Campbell et al in the early Nineties, Testino created a new breed of model, including Kate Moss, Stella Tennant and several other new UK beauties.

Though often classed among the 'Luxury Realists' of fashion (along with Steven Meisel, Craig McDean and David Sims), Testino refuses to analyse his work, preferring to see it as a visual rather than an intellectual endeavour. However, his fashion photography is so well studied that it has widely been granted the status of art, and has been the subject of numerous exhibitions. His most famous works include the advertising campaigns for Gucci, his black and white Burberry posters starring Kate Moss and Freddie Windsor and a shoot for Vogue's Millennium souvenir issue in silver, in which he staged the perfect fashion party, bringing together fashion's elite past (such as Lord Snowdon and Sir Hardy Amies) and present (John Galliano, Jade Jagger, Naomi Campbell, Devon Aoki and Alexander McQueen).

During the course of this study fashion photography has emerged in various forms the most notable one being the photography of fashion items showcased on models. These models were of faultless proportions and of immaculate appearance arguably creating a rather

unrealistic image in relation to the average fashion consumer. This raises the question as to how much of this 'non-reality' can be attributed to PR. During the interviews it emerged that fashion PR consultants are often involved in the production of fashion shoots especially if those are used for advertising. It transpired that if fashion companies spend large advertising budgets with certain publications, they do have a say into how their clothing appears within non-advertising fashion photography within newspapers and magazines. The cross over between fashion PR and the actual coverage can be found in the appointing of models as these are sometimes attached to PR agencies.

The research supports the ongoing ethical debate in relation with celebrity images which are often enhanced. In this regards Bivins (2004, p.136) notes: "Magazine ads that depict young women as unnaturally tall and thin may appear to be real when, in fact, they are subtly manipulated to improve already gaunt features. Although selective presentation may not be inherently unethical, much depends on the receiver's qualified expectation of reality. The clichéd advertising response of caveat emptor covers only so much transgression."

During this research it was established that art direction agencies are the most recent trend with regards to fashion photography. Acting as go between and managing image campaigns by appointing the appropriate photographers for the respective fashion company as well as handling the production and art direction of a photo-shoot in correspondence with fashion PR arguably eliminates the need for advertising agencies, a trend that in future is likely to enhance the power of the fashion PR industry even more.

### **Photograph 3:**

#### **Examples of Fashion Photography**



Source: <http://www.photoserve.com/photoserve/photos/2006/guesteditaug.jpg>

#### **7.9. Fashion Terminology**

Another noteworthy finding emerging from the research has been a particular style of writing in connection with fashion print media coverage. The language of fashion relies to a large extent on the superlative, and the vernacular has introduced some new language concepts in the process. Despite these innovations in verbiage, some tried and true metaphors and terms emerged from the content analysis, semi-structured interviews and participant-observation phases of the study alike. These included the frequent uses of the term, “*icon*” or “*iconic*” in reference to celebrity figures such as Kate Moss, Kylie Minogue, Sienna Miller and Sarah Jessica Parker. With regards to fashion PR the word “*buzz*” was used repeatedly by the interviewees and the subject related literature.

Throughout the content analysis, it became apparent that fashion coverage has its own style perimeters which varies greatly from traditional newspaper writing. On the whole fashion coverage brings along a far more unconventional way of writing which has its origins within PR press releases<sup>25</sup>. This becomes prominent within the headlines, the layout of the articles as well as in the wording. Text is largely kept to a minimum hence the style of writing is brief, often descriptive yet informal. In fact a specific fashion language seems to have emerged with vocabulary entirely created for the fashion industry. Words such as ‘*directional*’, ‘*trendsetter*’ or ‘*fashionista*’ are just a few examples. Arguably PR has a large impact on this with PR companies having particular brainstorming sessions during which they come up with new words. Table 23 lists frequently used terms within fashion writing.

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<sup>25</sup> It is important to note that within PR meetings and brain storming sessions for up-coming campaigns a certain importance lies within creating the right words to highlight the key messages of a collection and its key pieces.



**Table 23: List of Terms identified during the Course of Research**

Fashionista
Buzz
Icon
Iconic
Directional
Trendsetter
Fashion Victim
Fashion Police
Trendsetter
Fashion crimes
Tribal
Celeb-style
Retro
Hip
Cool
In/out
‘This is so last season’

Source: Table based on own research data.

As for the text and style of fashion writing, it emerged that headlines within fashion newspaper coverage are mostly non-traditional and vary from oversized black letters on white to colourful scripts and fonts (see 'Research Analysis' chapter). It is obvious that the fashion press intends to stand out and attract the reader's attention through such visual exercises. This is congruent with White and Griffith's (2000, p.175) observation that, "There is a need to create an aura of exclusivity and glamour around such simple clothes, since they lack the instant status cachet of more elaborate designer fashions, enticing consumers with the visual images attached to the designer's name. Both by association with glamorous star names, (Demi Moore and Bruce Willis for Donna Karan, Jodie Foster and countless other Oscar candidates for Armani), and using lifestyle-enhancing marketing campaigns, the prestige of such labels was raised".

#### **7.10. Fashion PR in the Marketing Advertising Mix**

During the course of this study the close knit relationship between fashion PR, marketing and advertising has been repeatedly noted and will be addressed further in this section taking into consideration the emergent findings. Tunstall (1971) maintains that because specialist fields in journalism associated with consumer-based activities are advertising-revenue driven, they nevertheless retain an intimate relationship with the industry which manufactures and promotes the product, since this is both the source of 'news' and of revenue.

Though the fundamental difference between fashion PR and advertising is that advertising is paid for coverage and PR is unpaid the two are very closely related. Throughout the course of this research it was confirmed that large advertisers within newspapers, newspaper supplements and fashion magazines<sup>26</sup> not only have their established position and placing of advertisements, they are also given a significant number of editorial space. However in terms of fashion PR this fact requires both sides to collaborate. The companies with the largest advertising budgets are the main fashion houses such as Chanel, Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Ralph Lauren, Dior, Dolce & Gabbana and Ferragamo. Within the top end glossy magazines they are the ones that occupy the prestigious positions of the inside front (IFC), inside back (IBC) and back covers (BC) as well as double page spreads (DPS) within the run of paper.

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<sup>26</sup> Tearing out advertising pages off magazines as an exercise to test the argument that these publications largely depend on advertising and to identify the actual true content has brought up that approximately 80% of fashion magazine space is allocated to advertisers.

**Photograph: 4 Fashion Advertisements**



Source: [www.versace.com](http://www.versace.com) , [www.miumiu.com](http://www.miumiu.com)

Advertorial, which is a variation of advertising as it is ‘disguised’ as editorial is often created in collaboration between fashion PR representatives and advertising executives. Advertorial usually spreads over one or more pages within a fashion magazine or newspaper supplement, often appearing to be a photo shoot with models wearing the clothes of the company that is advertising, i.e. paying for the coverage. If fashion PR practitioners use photographic material which was produced for advertising then it is necessary for both sides to collaborate in terms of copyright. Often fashion companies include their PR representatives in advertising meetings and brain storming sessions for potential campaigns as both advertising and PR campaigns should go hand-in-hand. A new

advertising campaign is also part of a fashion PR campaign as well as providing a story for fashion PR consultants which they can feed to the press separately. Arguably the relationship between fashion PR and marketing has also become largely interrelated. Originally marketing aimed at the end consumer and PR was just a small part of it. Now PR has become a vital ingredient within the mix as the press is regarded as the main source of inspiration for the fashion consumer and PR forms the crucial link between the fashion industry and the media.

In this regard, Proctor (2000, p.10) advises that a careful review of the industry environment is in order and points out the strategic opportunities available. “This involves analysis rather than action,” he notes, “but the results of the analysis are put into action through a specifically designed marketing programme involving carefully constructed marketing mix strategies for individual target markets”. Arguably the marketing mix is the most well known marketing term and its individual components represent the fundamental, tactical parts of a marketing plan; also known as the Four P's, the marketing mix elements are price, place, product, and promotion as shown in Figure 13.

**Figure: 13**

**The Marketing Mix Components.**



Source:

[http://www.provenmodels.com/files/11a7a7dc5acdcb06f944722a23b5f9de/four\\_principles\\_of\\_the\\_mark.gif](http://www.provenmodels.com/files/11a7a7dc5acdcb06f944722a23b5f9de/four_principles_of_the_mark.gif) [accessed 4<sup>th</sup> March 2008].

Easy (2002, p.4) describes fashion marketing as “...the application of a range of techniques and a business philosophy that centres upon the customer and potential customer of clothing and clothing related products and services in order to meet the long term goals of the organisation [...]” There are techniques within the fashion PR/marketing mix that are interrelated, in-store promotions being one of them. Sponsorship of events is a technique that brings all three disciplines together. The fashion company that provides sponsorship will have their company logo and possible advertisements included in all publicity material as well as at the actual event. The event itself will be of marketing value as it is most likely to communicate to potential consumers which at the same time give the PR professionals a story to tell the press about and an opportunity to invite journalists to.

Overall the research has been conducive in identifying fashion PR as the crucial link between the print media and the fashion industry. It has further shown that its vast power which is largely built upon business strategy and industry contacts has turned fashion PR into the vital ingredient within marketing and advertising. The findings of this research support Ries et al (2002) who argue that advertising is no longer the main form of obtaining consumer awareness rather it may be used to introduce a new product or trend but the daily maintenance is done via PR. Within fashion this is particularly the case and it is far more the work of PR using advertising as one tool in the process that creates an effective flow of communication between the fashion industry, the media and ultimately the consumer.

### **7.11. Fashion in Context with other Consumer Related PR**

There are many crossovers between fashion and with what is largely referred to as the lifestyle sector, which includes the areas of travel, beauty, motoring, music, health & fitness, personal finance and food. All these are small in comparison to the business, political and financial sectors and depend heavily upon a small net of contacts. Furthermore the emphasis is on marketing and ultimately selling products, thus most PR techniques are applied to that effect. Yet despite these similarities there are significant differences, which put fashion in a separate category.

McRobbie (2008) notes that; "...the relatively closed world of fashion makes it more difficult to untangle the relationship between fashion design and the fashion media. We are not able to simply place the designers in one corner and the editors and journalists in the other. There is so much mediation between the two (through PR departments, press offices and agents) that the very idea of looking at how the fashion media 'represents' fashion [...] is immediately more complicated than it might seem". Within the fashion media sphere there are fashion photographers, stylists, reporters, journalists and PRs yet very often designers change to being journalists and journalists become PRs, trend forecasters etc. There is an extremely high percentage of job shifting within the fashion world which makes it even more entwined and difficult to enter as an outsider.

Although all lifestyle and consumer categories are subject to visual content to a certain degree, it is the fashion industry that due to its continual change depends largely upon visual communication. The strong dependency on celebrity endorsers arises due to this



high visibility and consequently there is no other category in which people are associated to the same extent to a product as they are within fashion. Models, actresses, singers, sports people are all used as fashion endorsers and people such as Sienna Miller, Sarah Jessica Parker, David & Victoria Beckham appear regularly within the fashion pages. Arguably they are just as well known in connection with fashion as they are for their acting, singing and sporting abilities. This particular fact is vital with regards to fashion PR and implies a constant balancing act between attaching the right celebrity to the right product (Match-up Hypothesis as suggested by McCracken) as well as providing a first line of contact for the fashion press.

In this regard it is important to note that paparazzi have become a firmly established source within fashion reporting and PRs often use celebrity photographs produced by paparazzi photographers in order to promote their clients' products. Proper fashion photography on the other hand has become an art form in itself and stories are mainly created around particularly staged photo shoots which are often produced with the PR in attendance. The content analysis part of this research has shown that fashion coverage does not need much wording and thus often captions rather than actual text are used. However within newspapers there is a certain amount of text surrounding fashion and this research has found that a specific terminology has emerged in connection with fashion.

A further distinctive aspect specific to the fashion industry is its attributed glamour and the fact that fashion journalists enjoy a certain degree of celebrity themselves. Indeed much of their time is spent at fashion shows particularly during the bi-annual fashion weeks as well

as at special events/ parties to remain part of the set for the rest of the year. PRs are very aware of this fact and the continual planning of particularly staged fashion events ideally in attendance of one or more celebrities is one of the prime efforts of the fashion PR industry. Due to the above mentioned ongoing change of trends plus the small network of people the need to stay part of the fashion circle is of vast importance and thus there is no clear lineation as to where the job ends and where private life begins. Indeed fashion PR enjoys a very glamorous reputation and is thus a popular career choice amongst young women, which arguably sets it apart once more from other sections of lifestyle.

Fashion is not only characterised by the large designer houses, but mostly through small specialised companies all looking for media representation. This is not the case within other parts of lifestyle such as motoring or personal finance which arguably do not have the same appeal as fashion in the first place. Morris and Goldsworthy (2008) note: “Fashion [...] apart from being perceived as glamorous generates high levels of dedicated media coverage. This in turn justifies specialised consultancies and practitioners. Indeed the relationship between these sorts of sectors means that there is a high level of movement, usually from journalism to PR as PR due to higher salaries.”

Furthermore the relationship between fashion PR and journalism is very much one-sided and thus results in positive coverage whereas other parts of lifestyle are subject to a much more symmetrical approach – a new car for example can get bad coverage for not living up to the latest technical standards etc. Also as mentioned in previous chapters fashion plays an important economical role within UK newspapers and thus is given its own separate

department which is entirely independent of the news desk. This is not the case within any of the other consumer categories. They may have a journalist in residence (motoring journalism for example) but a full time team of journalists and stylists is only allocated to fashion.

In sum the distinctive characteristics within fashion are that it brings together mostly small firms<sup>27</sup>, big personalities (including designers, celebrities and models), specialist media coverage and a high level of interest in a way which few other sectors do. Other areas of specialist/ lifestyle PR display some but not all of these characteristics (for example, car producers are mainly large firms yet with few well known personalities representing them), while personal finance is arguably essentially about low-interest, grudge purchases and decisions; it is about big companies and largely 'personality free'. Added to the above comes the constant supply of fashion advertising and the huge number of new products coming forward all the time.

## **7.12 Summary**

The research has identified PR as the key ingredient for fashion coverage within UK newspapers and established it as the prime source of information for UK fashion journalists.

Through the content analysis part of this study it emerged that every newspaper in the UK carries fashion to a certain degree, with the tabloids generally covering the low end of the

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<sup>27</sup> Even the largest fashion firms are small in comparison to other companies.

market and the broadsheets covering the high end, however there are exceptions such as the Daily Mail which carries fashion from all categories. Fashion appears as a category of its own and is independent of the news desk.

All interviewees agreed that fashion coverage within UK newspapers is fundamentally dictated by advertising and is therefore of considerable economic importance to the respective paper yet it has no real news value. According to some interviewees, PR combined with advertising make for the most powerful combination which almost guarantees coverage. In fact the introduction of fashion supplements in the 1990s was an economical step taken by the publishers in order to gain more advertising leverage. This research has found that free editorial space, which often comes via way of advertising, is unheard of in other parts of journalism and a phenomenon accredited to fashion journalism as well as other parts of lifestyle reporting (interview with Nick Davies, April 2008).

Through the interviews as well as through the content analysis part of this research it emerged that celebrity endorsement along with a large contact base are the two key ingredients of fashion PR through which coverage can be almost guaranteed. Fashion PR departments and agencies tend to employ people with a substantial industry network, a further finding that transpired through the participant observation and is possibly the reason why fashion PR still lacks academic scrutiny. Chapter eight discusses in detail the above findings and the emergent conclusions.

## **Part V - Synthesis and Conclusion**

## **Chapter 8    Conclusions**

### **8.1.    Introduction**

This chapter marks the conclusion of the thesis, encapsulating the key findings and pointing out aspects of fashion PR and its direct impact on UK fashion newspaper coverage. It reflects upon the original research questions and findings and offers suggestions towards making the relationship between fashion PR and fashion journalism a more symbiotic one. It further offers ideas for future avenues of research.

### **8.2.    Concluding Synthesis**

A few years ago, the director of InStyle Magazine in an article for the Independent pointed out that:

“The job of dealing with the huge range of fashion journalists, and their temperaments and demands, requires the skills of a diplomat. It also calls for masterly organisation and a true appreciation of how a mention in a magazine or newspaper can mean the difference between generating high sales or no sales.”

(Independent Online, 12<sup>th</sup> September 2005)<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> The article can be accessed via <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/fashion-pr-the-unprofessionals-506520.html>

The analysis and interpretation of the information derived from the empirical research has very much confirmed this statement and revealed the vast importance attached to PR within the UK fashion industry. Given the original research questions and the aim to ultimately establish how PR operates in the fashion news media context, it transpired that fashion journalism recycles large amounts of PR material, usually with little checking and few criticisms. Gans & Jones in Lewis et al (2008) describe the relationship between journalists and PR people, as essentially one of conflict, but note that it can also be viewed as a “trading” or “exchange” relationship in which under-resourced journalists, working in under-staffed newsrooms, increasingly rely on PR sources for copy, while offering access to editorial columns for PR messages in return. This research has found that this “trading” or “exchange” relationship particularly applies to fashion journalism and thus highlights the strong position of the fashion PR industry.

It is important to point out that all UK newspapers cover fashion yet no examples of newspapers funding genuine, i.e. independent, non PR based, fashion research could be found during the course of research. Suzy Menkes, (now fashion editor of the International Herald Tribune and so no longer writing for a UK national newspaper) is the only journalist who was continually being mentioned as one who does not rely on PR sources but does her own reporting.

It was further established that fashion coverage plays an important financial role within UK newspapers. Fashion departments are very small and often employ freelance staff to keep costs low however fashion generates considerable amounts of advertising revenue (exact

percentages could not be ascertained but it is an estimated 30% within UK newspapers) and seems to be considered an area which attracts readers. The lack of journalistic resources however strongly points towards the notion that fashion journalism is largely journalism in name only, as it exhibits few if any of the characteristics that are traditionally ascribed to journalism. Crucial journalistic tasks such as investigation, research and cross-checking information have been replaced by relying on PR sources. Fashion journalism's role has been reduced to exercising a limited choice over which sources it uses, and sometimes the degree of prominence the recycled PR receives. Free promotional gifts (freebies) in particular appear to be a successful route to coverage, something that would be highly questionable within any other part of journalism.

The research has shown that fashion PR has a clear manipulative function, using an array of methods including the supply of ready-made stories and photographic material, the above mentioned luxurious freebies, giving exclusives to certain papers/magazines; as well as utilising the power of celebrities. As former fashion editor Liz Jones points out: "Everyone in fashion knows about the proliferation of freebies, but no one seems ready to take the moral high ground and refuse gifts in the interest of journalistic integrity (apart from Suzy Menkes). These freebies are nothing less than bribes, if beautifully cut and packaged ones. How could I possibly not give space to Louis Vuitton when I had just been given such a lovely suitcase?" (Daily Mail, Interview 5<sup>th</sup> May 2006, p.17). This statement was repeatedly confirmed throughout the course of this research and appears to be common knowledge within fashion circles.



It has also emerged that fashion journalists can be very demanding and expect specific treatment from the PR industry. Their main power is not so much the threat of negative coverage, which is rare, but the denial of coverage. Arguably the main role of fashion journalists is to choose between PR sources. The instant loan of fashion items for both professional (i.e. photographic shoots) as well as personal use (i.e. dinner invitations) is common practice. In this regard it is worth noting that some fashion journalists carry a certain celebrity status themselves and the fashion PR industry uses this to its advantage by readily supplying products to them.

The content analysis part of this study demonstrated that the tabloids generally have a higher content of fashion coverage than the broadsheets but tend to cover the low end of the market. The broadsheets on the other hand cover the high end, with the Daily Mail being the exception of carrying both. However it is important to note that fashion is a category of its own and is independent of the news desk. As mentioned earlier in this section, the research disclosed that journalism in its traditional sense does not apply to fashion journalism. Fashion coverage within UK newspapers is fundamentally dictated by advertising and is therefore of considerable economic importance to the respective paper but has little traditional news value. PR combined with advertising make for the most powerful combination which guarantees coverage. This confirms Tungate's (2005) observations who also points out the immense power advertisers hold over the fashion press, thus identifying fashion journalism as an autonomous part within UK newspapers.

This research has further found that a dedicated amount of pages is given to fashion coverage every week thus allowing considerable room for PR activities. This is also known as pre-booked editorial space. These findings indicate the substantial economic value of fashion PR towards UK newspapers and are in line with a statement by former Telegraph editor Max Hastings (2002) who in his memoir points out that he had little knowledge as to 'what exactly was going on in the fashion department' but agrees that newspapers need and benefit from it.

Furthermore the emergence of newspaper supplements has opened up a considerable outlet for fashion coverage and therefore advertising space. In fact the appearance of fashion supplements in the 1990s was a step taken by the publishers in order to gain more advertising leverage (Interview with Clodagh Norton 9<sup>th</sup> December 2005). Most of these supplements have glossy magazine character and appear within the weekend issues. This research has also found that free editorial space is given to large fashion advertisers.

It can further be said that PR has moved away from its original supporting role in the marketing/ advertising mix and now holds a firm standing and a mediating position. Advertising and marketing to a large extent have become components within PR campaigns rather than vice versa. This explains the significant lack of objectivity and scepticism within fashion reporting which has led to the notion that critical/investigative journalism within fashion is virtually non existent but rather serves as a tool for the fashion industry with PR forming the crucial link between the two. According to a recent report by

MediaTel Insight (2009)<sup>29</sup>, the main provider of research reports for UK media and advertising, 70% of newspaper income derives from advertising, sales only account for 30%. Arguably this is likely to change in the future and sales will account for even less thus opening up even more leverage for PR and advertising.

This research has also revealed the vast sociological aspect of fashion PR as it spreads into various different fields, celebrity culture being the most significant one. Celebrity endorsement appeared as a conspicuous and fundamental aspect in the context of fashion PR and is in line with previous research in that area (Turner 2004, Dyer, 2002, McCracken 1980). This thesis has identified the omnipresence of celebrities within fashion PR and recognises celebrity endorsement as PR's key method which is more prominent than in any other comparative sector. It further found that PR plays a firm part in the manufacturing and maintenance of celebrities for the purpose of fashion promotion. Even the smallest fashion label or new launch is keen to employ even a lesser known celebrity in order to promote their products as this provides instant credibility and almost guarantees coverage.

It became prominent throughout the course of research that celebrities add to the newsworthiness of fashion. When fashion makes front page news it is almost certain that it is due to celebrity endorsement. Consequently a considerable amount of PR activity is geared towards approaching and appointing the right celebrity for the respective fashion brand. Product placement on films and television is an extension of this. Award ceremonies are prime events for fashion PR and free products are sent via PR representatives to the celebrities with the main aim that those gowns will be worn on the

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<sup>29</sup> <http://insight.mediatel.co.uk/executive-reports/uk-national-newspapers/> [accessed 16<sup>th</sup> August 2009]

night. Many designers use their PR representatives to find A-list celebrities for whom they will create a specific design. Giorgio Armani has a long standing history of being the designer to the stars and has been as Turner (2005) points out the number one couturier for the Academy Awards<sup>30</sup>.

The visual impact within fashion coverage plays a crucial part and is arguably far more important than the written word. Thus it is largely due to paparazzi and fashion photographers that fashion items make it to the front pages of UK newspapers. However the historical part of this research has shown that photography within fashion has always been important. Often fashion photographers have become celebrities in their own right such as Cecil Beaton, Mario Testino or Patrick Demarchelier. Many of their photographs have become well known pieces of art.

Through the tracing of PR material relevant and with a direct reference to the identified fashion coverage the level at which fashion PR is involved in the process as well as in the end result has been clearly established. Even more than within any other part of journalism the fashion press relies and depends heavily on ‘being fed’ by the fashion PR industry. This is largely achieved through the creation and careful maintenance of contacts or rather relationships and friendships. Reporting and investigative journalism within fashion seems non-existent. The research has clearly shown where the power and the dependencies lie. Fashion journalists on the whole do not research their own stories but turn to PR resources for information. This also to a great extent explains the non-critical nature of fashion coverage, a further prominent finding which is in line with McRobbie who calls fashion

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<sup>30</sup> The Oscar’s throughout the 1990s in fashion circles were also known as Armani Night (Turner, 2005).

journalism "a conflict free zone, both in academic terms and in the wider world of journalistic commentary." (McRobbie, 2003, p.258)

Overall the research has been conducive in establishing fashion PR as the prime force behind any fashion newspaper coverage in the UK and has confirmed the original theory that fashion journalism is journalism in name only and exhibits few if any characteristics of traditional journalism.

### **8.3. The Middle Way**

Although both fashion journalists and fashion PRs agree that neither could exist without the other, there seems to be an underlying animosity between the two professions. In order to overcome this and create a more symbiotic relationship both would benefit from a common basis. Although perhaps difficult in practice, as fashion PR remains largely unstudied in an academic sense and the industry often employs people purely on the base of their contacts as well as their appearance, a step in the right direction would be to offer special training. Fashion journalism should be part of this training so that both sides have a more mutual understanding of each other's objectives. The same goes for fashion journalists, a course within fashion focused PR should be offered either within their studies or as part of an introductory training program as they start work for a newspaper. Arguably if both sides come from a similar theoretical background a mutual level of understanding and communication should be more easily achieved.

On a more practical level, it transpired throughout the course of this study that fashion journalists work to very tight schedules, an important fact that has to be taken into account by the PR executive and become a prime focus. Up-to-date information has to be accessible at a moment's notice. A fashion PR in the true sense should be a reliable source of information to the relevant journalist. He or she should possess exceptional communication skills and have a holistic approach to the profession. This includes academic credentials, a large practical knowledgebase of the product they are representing and ideally beyond, as well as a considerable network of industry contacts.

Fashion journalists on the other hand need to be realistic about their demands and exact in their description of what information or product they seek from the PR executive. Ideally they should go back to researching their own articles and be discouraged from accepting freebies that bribe them into favourable coverage however as per this research the pressure on the media is such that this is not a viable option. The main problem remains the economical dependence of UK newspapers on large advertisers. At the time of writing 70% of newspaper income derived from advertising and 30% from sales. As long as this is the case with the added factor that large advertisers demand free editorial in return and fashion editors are known to favour certain fashion houses over others, there will be no objective fashion reporting within UK newspapers.

Furthermore, today's obsession with celebrity culture has added another factor to this dilemma. Celebrities are paid by the respective designer or fashion house to promote their products and these companies are usually the same ones with large advertising budgets.

Consequently these celebrities will be photographed and appear on the fashion and front pages of UK newspapers. Taking all the above into consideration, it can be said that fashion reporting remains bias and probably will be for the foreseeable future..

#### **8.4. Avenues for Future Research**

The process of undertaking this research has exposed several issues which deserve further attention and which are important in view of establishing fashion PR within the academic debate.

Firstly, the most obvious one appears to be further examination of fashion PR and its role within the non print media thus applying a set of research methods appropriate for this type of investigation. In this regards audience research via way of perception studies would be of interest in order to establish how fashion coverage is perceived by the consumer and in what way they are influenced i.e. in the way fashion is consumed and the level of trust given to these sources. In addition an analysis of the awareness of the PR activity behind fashion coverage would make an interesting study. Focus groups and in depth interviews might be appropriate methods of enquiry. Following on from this an analysis of how fashion PR refers to the end consumer and in what way campaigns are tailored towards them might be of interest.

Furthermore an analysis of fashion PR's function towards other media would be of significance. The internet in particular and the way the industry uses this medium to its

advantage would allow for another route of future research. Blogging and social networking websites such as 'Facebook' or 'MySpace' would be areas of special interest in terms of reaching individuals and targeting specific groups.

Additional areas of interest for future research that emerged during the course of research included off springs of PR such as networking agencies. Particularly within fashion the importance of well established contacts is arguably larger than within any other field. One recurring aspect within the interviews has been the fact that a successful PR practitioner lives of his or her contacts and needs to maintain those at all costs. Networking agencies are a phenomenon entirely due to the small and closed world of the fashion industry with well connected individuals offering their services. This could be in the form of putting businesses in touch with each other or matching the right spokesperson to a specific brand. Fashionnetwork.com and fashionspace.com are two of the prominent networking websites offering contacts and insider information to their members.

A similar study to this one could be carried out analysing the areas of beauty and lifestyle PR and possibly drawing parallels. Perfumes in particular could be looked at as they form an extension of fashion and hold a specific place within the fashion/beauty/lifestyle context. It is often the PR agencies who suggest to the designers to launch a perfume as a lucrative form of extending the brand image whilst offering PR leverage.

Throughout this research the author has been intrigued by the way PR techniques are applied and in what way these might evolve. Future studies could involve critical examinations of PR activity and new ways of communication with the press, taking into



consideration activities such as guerilla PR, personalised campaigns, blogging and spiral marketing.

A further interesting new ingredient for fashion PR that has emerged during this research are art direction agencies, which are the most recent trend with regards to fashion photography. Acting as go betweens and managing image campaigns by appointing the appropriate photographers for the respective fashion company as well as handling the production and art direction of a photo-shoot in correspondence with fashion PR arguably eliminates the need for advertising agencies. This can arguably be seen as a trend that is likely to enhance the power of the fashion PR industry even further in the future. In terms of potential research this particular area makes a prominent case for investigation as it would call for the analysis of PR's power in creating new disciplines within consumer communication.

Further research could include cross national comparisons, as well as comparative studies i.e. the use of fashion PR within high street fashion as opposed to designer fashion.

During the course of this study the author has become increasingly aware of the self importance of the fashion industry and the way this is communicated to the consumer. Future studies could look at the sociological aspects in terms of representation of the self and how PR uses this to its advantage, thus expanding upon the works of Joan Entwistle and Pamela Church Gibson

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Overall this research has explored many avenues linked with the core of fashion, PR and journalism and has established that fashion holds a unique position within lifestyle journalism throughout UK newspapers. It has uncovered and established that neither the fashion PR industry nor fashion journalism could exist without each other and the findings here within should be used as a foundation for the vast potential of future research in this area.

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<http://www.mintel.com> accessed on 12th May 2005

<http://www.ipr.org.uk/direct/careers.asp?v1=whatis> accessed on 22nd August 2003

<http://reference.allrefer.com/encyclopedia/P/publicre.html> accessed 29th June 2005

<http://ics.leeds.ac.uk/papers/index.cfm?outfit=pmt>

### **Further Websites frequently used for General Information:**

<http://www.ipr.org.uk>

<http://www.vogue.com>

<http://www.style.com>

<http://www.prweek.com>

<http://www.prca.com>

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk>

<http://www.mintel.com>

<http://www.ipr.org.uk>

<http://www.questia.com>

<http://www.mediachannel.org/>

<http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/>

[http://www.opendemocracy.net/editorial\\_tags/media\\_and\\_the\\_net](http://www.opendemocracy.net/editorial_tags/media_and_the_net)

<http://www.journalism.org/>

<http://www.projectcensored.org/>

<http://concernedjournalists.org>

<http://www.journalismmatters.org.uk/>

<http://www.mediastandardstrust.org/home.aspx> <http://www.cpb.org.uk/>

## Appendix 1

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<b>List of Sample Newspapers used for Content Analysis January – June 2004</b>
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- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Daily Telegraph,</li><li>• The Times</li><li>• The Daily Mail</li><li>• The Guardian</li><li>• The Independent</li><li>• The Express</li><li>• The Financial Times</li><li>• The Mirror</li></ul> |
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## Appendix 2

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<b>List of Interviewees</b> <b>(Interviews carried out in 2003 &amp; 2005 &amp; 2007)</b>
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1. Kate Halfpenny – Fashion Stylist/Writer & Designer
2. Alisa Marks – Freelance Fashion Stylist and ex Head of Design for French Connection
3. Gabriele Shaw – Director of Gabriele Shaw Communications
4. Janine du Plessis – Freelance Fashion PR and ex Company director of Janine Du Plessis PR
5. Michael Talboys – Fashion Expert and Lecturer at the London College of Fashion
6. John Harrison – Fashion Stylist
7. Susie Miller – Fashion Writer
8. Clodagh Norton – Fashion writer and Editor 20/20 Magazine
9. Chris Smith – Director Inspects Ltd
10. Robin Totterman – Director Inspects Ltd
11. Caroline Totterman – Freelance Fashion PR
12. Julian Vogel – Director Modus Publicity
13. Frederic Marigaux – Fashion Photographer (London & Paris)
14. Nick Davies – News journalist Guardian & author of Flat Earth News
15. Roger Latham – Fashion Stylist
16. Helen Robinson – Fashion Designer
17. Jeremy Garson – Event Organiser
18. Virginie Marigaux – Fashion PR Consultant (London & Paris)
19. Erica Bolton – Director Bolton & Quinn PR
20. Daisy Finer – Fashion Writer
21. Andrew Groves – Fashion Lecturer, University of Westminster
22. Anonymous – Fashion Journalist, Times UK
23. Anonymous – Fashion Journalist, Daily Mail
24. Anonymous – Fashion Journalist, Vogue UK

## Appendix 3

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### Participant Observation Notes – (Transcript)

- No attention to literature is paid in the daily routine of a fashion PR executive.
- Staff not particularly trained in PR.
- Most important fact for employment within fashion PR is contacts
- Most employees started with un-paid work experience working in the sample room, cutting out press coverage, stuffing envelopes, chasing journalists for samples or replies for launches etc.
- Fashion PR is more about people than about academic foundation
- Fashion companies who spend money on advertising within newspapers (esp. supplements) are getting more coverage than those that don't spend money on advertising.
- There are obvious trends within print media fashion coverage. The press picks up on certain products and coverage about the same product appears throughout the chosen sample of newspapers.
- Structure of PR agencies is the same on different levels. It is mainly divided into:
  - Account Director
  - Account Manager
  - Account Executive
- Achieving press coverage seems significantly easier if there is already a relationship between the PR executive and the relevant journalist

- A typical day of a PR executive within a fashion PR agency consists of daily monitoring of current press articles and fashion features, followed by ‘call-rounds’ to all relevant fashion editors and journalists to find out what stories they work on and whether they would be interested in featuring any of the agency’s client’s products for any of the up-coming features. Press releases are sent on a regular basis and followed up by phone calls.
- It seems an inter-dependable relationship for both press and PR people as both seem to be heavily relying on the other (though journalists within my research do not seem to admit to that)
- In 65% of fashion press coverage parts of or whole press releases are being copied
- Fashion editors are being “inundated with press releases every day” (quote Clodagh Norton, freelance fashion editor) and unable to respond to all of them
- There is too much material and too many fashion companies/products who need promotion
- Fashion Press is ‘spoilt’ by free samples and invitation to glamorous parties and events
- PR activities for the designers pick up significantly towards the round of Fashion weeks in London, New York, Milan and Paris is where all important press and buyers are coming together to view next year’s collections.
- Stylists are a crucial target for fashion PRs as they are the ones who dress celebrities, fashions’ most important way of getting press coverage.

## Appendix 4

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### Example of Content Analysis Coding Schedule

#### Fashion Press Coverage in British Newspapers

Newspaper sample	Newspaper
1.Daily Telegraph	
2.The Times	
3.The Guardian	
4.The Independent	
5.The Express	5
6.The Financial Times	
7.The Daily Mail	
8.The Mirror	



<b>Date-Month-Year</b>	<b>18/05/04</b>
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<b>Headline</b> (copy verbatim)	<b>Why we all love a bit of etail therapy</b>
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**Exact positioning of article in newspaper**

Page Number	<b>30-31</b>
Referencing	<b>None</b>
Advertising of article within the newspaper	<b>None</b>

<b>Journalist/ Author</b> (name & designation, if given, verbatim)	<b>John Triggs</b>
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**Article Length /Column Length**

Pages of text	<b>1 ½</b>
Inches of text	<b>60</b>
Pages of pics	<b>¾</b>
Inches of pics	<b>50</b>

<b>Prominence of Headline</b> (bold, capitals, etc.)	<b>Big black letters in grey box centred above the text</b>
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**Type of Article/ Item**

1 Main News Story	
2 Other News Story	
3 Feature Article	<b>3</b>
4 Celebrity Article	<b>4 – Jemima Khan</b>
5 Editorial	
6 Celebrity Interview	
7 Fashion Insider Interview	
8 Photo Shoot	
9 Product Article/ Shoot	
10 Promotional Feature	
11 Competition	
12 Fashion Column/ regular feature	
13 Other	

**Fashion focus**

1 Fashion is the main focus	
2 Fashion is a secondary focus	
3 Fashion is mentioned only in passing	<b>3</b>

**Specification of fashion**

1 Designer Fashion & name of designer	<b>Azzedine Alaia</b>
2 High Street Fashion & name of label	
3 Both	
4 Neither	

**Advertising surrounding the article**

	<b>None</b>
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## **Appendix 5**

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### **Selection of Interview Notes (Transcript Verbatim)**

**Interview with JV, founder of M. Publicity – 5<sup>th</sup> June 2007**

**How many people work at M. PR?**

55 people

**How many out of that work on just fashion.**

About 35

**How many fashion PR clients do you have?**

17

**What are the occupational backgrounds of people working on fashion PR for your company?**

They come from various areas. Graduates tend to have some sort of media or business background. However for us the most important thing is to employ individuals with a positive, can-do attitude – that is one of the most important qualities you need in order to work in fashion PR. Contacts are important if people join s on a higher level, but often they work their way up. They start off doing work experience and often get promoted after spending time in the showroom. In order to work for us they need to understand the way the agency functions from the bottom up.

### **How important is the relationship between the press and PR?**

It is a very important relationship and we always try and be as helpful to journalists as we possibly can. We know they work on tight deadlines. However there is about a handful of journalists who tend to prefer doing their own research and use PR agencies as little as possible. I recall a party we did ages ago in a fashion store in Notting Hill when it was just about to become an up and coming part of town. We invited journalists from a cross section of media. At a certain point I noticed Suzie Menkes (of the ....) taking pictures from outside the window. She has always researched her own articles and is a great journalist.

### **What do you consider as the most distinctive function of consumer/ fashion PR?**

To be as informative and helpful to journalists as possible. We offer a service to them and our clients so it is our main priority to deliver the goods, be it via showroom visits, by lending product, managing and holding events or by being the UK representatives at the respective fashion weeks.

### **Why is consumer/ fashion coverage almost always positive and non-critical?**

Journalists tend to write about latest trends and developments within the fashion industry. If they disagree with a trend or certain fashion items they tend not to feature them at all rather than waste column inches ripping something apart. Although having said that, this sometimes happen especially within newspapers which have much more of a news angle than magazines after fashion week shows. Newspaper press coverage after a fashion week show can make or break a designer.

### **How important is advertising in relation to PR?**

It is very important especially magazines are very much advertising led. If a fashion company advertises within a magazine they are being given a certain amount of column inches of editorial. Priority is being given to main advertisers who take the back and insider front covers. They are also to a certain extent in control of what the journalist writes about their products. This is different within newspapers as those have a much shorter life span and advertising happens on a lesser scale. They come from much more of

a news angle. However the introduction of newspaper supplements has given way to advertisers and a lot of effort is given to the creation of their front covers in order to give them a longer lifespan. Within those supplements again priority is given to main advertisers, but a great deal is also initiated by PR alone.

**Which techniques do you consider most essential for a successful consumer PR campaign?**

This totally depends on who you are targeting. A PR campaign for Vogue is very different to one for Grazia. You have to have their readers in mind. Often giving an exclusive to a top end magazine or newspaper is the most effective PR tool, but this obviously tends to be for well established products or designers. For example Sienna and Savannah Millers 27/12 Collection has been so desperately awaited and we gave the exclusive to Vogue. Only later did we have a launch party for all the other journalists to come and view the collection. But there are lots of other ways of creating buzz. Speed is of great importance. We now mainly send e-releases as opposed to ordinary press releases by post. Usually we do an audit before we take on clients and discuss with them in great detail which form of PR exercises are most effective for them.

**What is the approximate time-span from the start of a PR campaign to the first results in terms of press coverage?**

That depends on the client and the publication. Magazines work 3-4 months ahead so that would be when you see first results. With newspapers or TV results can be seen immediately.

**How important is celebrity/ 3<sup>rd</sup> party endorsement?**

Celebrities are vital. Journalists tend to turn up for things if they know a worthwhile celebrity will be there, also pictures with celebrities wearing clothes are more popular. However there can be a downside to this. If the celebrity for whatever reason loses his/her popularity so will the product they are creating – though in the case of Kate Moss recent cocaine scandal this did not matter. She has untouchable icon status.

**How do you establish and maintain relations with the press?**

We try and communicate with journalist frequently. Offer them visits to the showroom and hire out product. We also hold press open days twice a year so they can come and see all the clients we represent at our premises.



**Email Interview with Andrew Groves, Fashion Designer and Course Director at The University of Westminster – Interview Date 19<sup>th</sup> November 2007**

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**How important in your view is the relationship between the fashion press and fashion PR?**

Essential in terms of them both feeding off each others needs. In a very harsh analysis journalists are lazy and more than happy to have 'the story' handed on a plate to them. Even more so if it comes with free samples, perfume, gifts etc.

**What do you consider as the most distinctive function of fashion PR?**

Reenergizing interest in, for the most part, a constantly changing product that is mostly very boring. Good fashion PR manages to make you feel that what was the 'next great thing' is the 'worst thing imaginable' every 6 months.

**Why is consumer/ fashion coverage almost always positive and non-critical?**

Because fashion advertisers are the second or third biggest advertisers in the national press and even higher in the magazine press. So on one hand they pay everyone's wages and on

the other hand nearly all editors of national papers are male and see 'fashion' as being a non serious female subject, not worthy of serious journalism unless in relation to child labour or green issues.

**Does fashion journalism still exist?**

Yes. Suzy Menkes is alive and well.

**How important is advertising in relation to PR?**

Essential, but more important is highly focused and differential advertising is what is important in a information saturated world.

**How important is celebrity/ 3<sup>rd</sup> party endorsement?**

Double edge sword. Needs constant high maintenance management, the celebrities worth having are also the most likely to damage a brands public face.

**Interview with J.d.P. of MPR – 17<sup>th</sup> May 2006**

**How many people work at JdPPR?**

Just me and occasionally a secretary or a student on work experience.

**How many out of that work on just fashion.**

Just me

**How many fashion PR clients do you have?**

4

**How important is the relationship between the press and PR?**

It is most important. I think these days one could not exist without the other. The fashion world is very fast moving and to stay on top of trends and latest looks PR is the only way for journalists to keep up. Although having said that there are still some who try and make a point in researching their own stories.

**What do you consider as the most distinctive function of consumer/ fashion PR?**

To always be on top of trends and know exactly which messages your client wants to communicate to the press. You have to be the main source of information and have everything at hand all the time. Speed is vital, especially in terms of newspapers as they have very tight deadlines.

**Why is consumer/ fashion coverage almost always positive and non-critical?**

Fashion is meant to be fun and the media is used to inform the consumer about the latest trends so there is very little point in writing about non trends.

**How important is advertising in relation to PR?**

Fashion PR and advertising have always been seen as closely interlinked which is true to a certain extent. Magazines need advertising in order to exist. However the distinct difference is that PR is third party endorsement and is meant to be genuine in the sense that it comes free. I am of the position that fashion PR is perhaps aided by Fashion advertising but nothing more.

**Which techniques do you consider most essential for a successful consumer PR campaign?**

The relationships you have built with the press and your clients are vital in order to run a successful campaign. Once you have established those it is about originality as there are so many companies out there longing for press coverage. Speed is always vital too, as journalists have a tendency to want things rather quickly.

**What is the approximate time-span from the start of a PR campaign to the first results in terms of press coverage?**

That depends on the client and the publication. Magazines work 3-4 months ahead so that would be when you see first results. With newspapers or TV results can be seen immediately.

**How important is celebrity/ 3<sup>rd</sup> party endorsement?**

Celebrities have become more and more important and the fashion industry would not exist in this format without them. Celebrities make fashion desirable for the masses and as it is such a visual industry, they tend to give fashion a face. Arguably this is where the whole super model thing originated. Celebrities in the old days were muses, now they are 'must-haves'. I sometimes think there is a need for more celebrities as there are so many fashion companies out there.

**How do you establish and maintain relations with the press?**

I try and speak to all relevant journalists on a regular basis. I tend to find out what stories they work on at the beginning of every week. The need to be 'loved' and personal contact is always more valued than an email. However the information you give them has to be accurate and always at hand as they can switch and go to someone else at any time.

**Interview with G.S. of GSPR – 6<sup>th</sup> October 2004**

**How many people work at GSPR?**

20 people

**How many out of that work on just fashion.**

5

**How many fashion PR clients do you have?**

3

**What are the occupational backgrounds of people working on fashion PR for your company?**

Most of them have a degree of some sort, lately we have had a number of applicants who have a degree in Media or PR. We do look forw ambitious people and contacts within the industry are always helpful. Often we employ students on a work experience basis and they come back after they finish their degrees and often get promoted quickly.

**How important is the relationship between the press and PR?**

It is vital. I think neither could work without the other, but I do think PR is of significant importance to fashion journalists as they could not keep up with the sheer quantity of products so they need 'feeding' useful and easy information by the PR industry.

**What do you consider as the most distinctive function of consumer/ fashion PR?**

To be as informative and helpful to journalists as possible, to supply them with the samples they need and be speedy in replying to all their requests. This is a fast living industry with a very fast turn around trends come and go and it is important to stay on top of them – always be a step ahead.

**Why is consumer/ fashion coverage almost always positive and non-critical?**

This is typical within the lifestyle sector – if a fashion journalist does not like a fashion item then she/he is probably not giving it any time at all i.e. no coverage. It is all about making fashion items appeal to journalists, hence the spoiling treatment of freebies, samples and invitations.

**How important is advertising in relation to PR?**



It is vital. More in the magazine world than within newspapers though. Magazines are bound to give free coverage to their advertisers. Newspapers have less space for advertising due to their much shorter life span, however there is some scope. Advertising is also important in terms of giving a label or a trend an 'image' and though it is paid for coverage as opposed to unpaid, it creates a certain buzz in itself. However I still think PR is ultimately more effective as people tend to listen more to an expert's opinion and fashion editors are considered experts.

**Which techniques do you consider most essential for a successful consumer PR campaign?**

Spoiling journalists is always a good way of attracting their attention – this can be in the form of freebies or party invitations. Celebrity endorsement is vital within fashion PR it gives the label or designer a 'face' with which people can associate or aspire to.

**What is the approximate time-span from the start of a PR campaign to the first results in terms of press coverage?**

That depends on the client and the publication. Magazines work 3-4 months ahead so that would be when you see first results. With newspapers or TV results can be seen immediately.

**How important is celebrity/ 3<sup>rd</sup> party endorsement?**

Celebrities are vital. As the fashion industry totally depends on visuals, celebrities are of great importance and have huge influence. There is also a co-dependence for example the right or wrong dress worn to the Oscars can make or break an actress. Designers constantly try and get their dresses on famous people, it adds enormous credibility.

**How do you establish and maintain relations with the press?**

We are in constant contact with the press, we keep to a schedule in which we call them on a daily basis, find out what stories they work on and what they may require from us. We also call them for feedback, send them presents on their birthdays and for Christmas and generally try and keep them interested.

**Interview with C.N. fashion editor and freelance fashion writer – 09.12.2005**

**How important is the relationship between the press and PR?**

It is very much a two way relationship, the press relied on PRs for information and of course if there wasn't as much media especially print media interest, PR would not be in existence to such an extent. – To sum this up one very much relies on the other.

**What do you consider as the most distinctive function of consumer/ fashion PR?**

To create awareness and a buzz around a product/design. Fashion in my view is a very important part of the lifestyle industry and to inform in whichever form is PRs most important role.

**How important is PR in relation to your work?**

Very. I totally rely on the help of fashion PRs. When I am writing a lengthy feature I try and meet up with them and borrow product. I speak to PRs on a daily basis. They usually call me up anyway to inform me about new launches and give me product updates, they also spoil me with goodies...When I need information quickly I tend phone them or request an e-release or if I need an interview with a designer it is through the PRs that I get to see them. Equally I need their assistance when it comes to the use of visuals. Often we do not

have the time or the budget for a photoshoot so I get images through them and use them in the magazine.

**Which PR techniques do you consider most essential for a successful feature/ article?**

I guess it is the speed with which PRs can get me information. This is usually the biggest problem in the publishing industry – we need things yesterday... (laughs).

I appreciate immediate access to accurate information and also in terms of borrowing product. It gets stressful if you are in need of a certain fashion item which is used by 10 other publications at the same time.

**Why is consumer/ fashion coverage almost always positive and non-critical?**

I suppose there is not much point in writing in a negative style about something in a fashion magazine. If we do not like a trend or a new style we just don't feature it. We tend to shoot product that we know our readers will identify with or sometimes we run a feature whereby we go out and ask people on the street what they think of certain trends.

**How important is celebrity/ 3<sup>rd</sup> party endorsement?**

Quite, as images with famous people wearing beautiful clothes tend to sell more magazines. Fashion orientated people have a natural longing to look good and through celebrity endorsement they aspire to look just like those famous people – it works.

**Is fashion PR directly responsible for fashion coverage in UK newspapers?**

It is certainly very important and either could not exist without the other – I need PRs as my work depends on timely delivery of copy and their information supply is important. However it is a symbiotic relationship, they could not live without the fashion press.

## Appendix 6

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### **Press release re Matthew Williamson providing dresses for Golden Globe Awards.**

Matthew Williamson Dresses Joely Richardson and Sienna Miller for the Golden Globes

LONDON, England, January 26 /PRNewswire/ -- British fashion designer Matthew Williamson was pleased to dress British actress Sienna Miller and Joely Richardson for the Los-Angeles based Golden Globe Awards on 25th January 2004.

Ms. Richardson, who was nominated for best TV actress for the cosmetic drama Nip/Tuck chose a Peacock georgette column dress from the Matthew Williamson's Spring Summer 2004 collection.

Ms. Miller chose a Fuschia pink silk column from Matthew Williamson's Autumn Winter 04 Wildest Dreams collection, yet to be shown at NY Fashion Week.

For more information about Matthew Williamson, please contact:

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