THE INFLUENCE OF PRODUCT PUBLICITY ON ATTITUDE FORMATION FOR FASHION PRODUCTS

Master thesis, MSc. in Marketing

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2010

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1. Introduction

In recent years, the criticism of advertising has escalated due to increasing cost and advertising clutter (Rosengren 2008). The consumer world has become a message-saturated environment and consumers have developed an ability to screen out advertising messages (Carroll 2009). Several authors have identified publicity as a valuable alternative to advertising in marketing, because it entails getting products featured in the editorial content of media as opposed to the paid content (Ries & Ries 2004).

Despite the popularity of publicity in practice, the phenomenon is still very much a terra incognito in marketing literature. As a marketing professional you thus have only a limited framework from which to approach and analyze publicity.

The phenomenon of product publicity is particularly prominent in the fashion industries, where magazines are overflowing with effervescent product descriptions.

To understand the influence of fashion magazines one only has to consider the *"New Look"* collection by Christian Dior in 1947. This milestone in 20th century fashion history was created by American *Vogue* which featured the collection and gave it the name simply by writing; "*This is a New Look!*" (Tungate 2008).

In addition to creating awareness of the products, the magazines are perceived as the best way of reaching the target audience, and the assumption of the industry is that consumers base their purchase decisions on what the see in magazines (White 2010, Tungate 2008). However, the coupling of product publicity and fashion products has never been investigated.

1.1 Problem statement

Since it has become increasingly common to attempt to get products featured in the editorial content of different media, it is relevant to consider which functions this editorial content serves for the consumer, and thus which potential the inclusion of a product in the editorial content has of influencing the consumer's attitude towards this product.

The tendency to use product publicity in the fashion industry suggests that there may be some synergy effect between this communication form and the fashion product. This leads to the following two research questions:

RQ1: How does the current literature explain the influence of product publicity influence on consumer behavior?

- Publicity is defined as *"editorial space, rather than paid space, in print, broadcast media, to promote a product, place or person"* (Kotler 1993 in Loda & Coleman 2005).

RQ2: How does product publicity influence the consumer's attitude formation for women's fashion products?

- Preliminarily, fashion products are understood as all apparel, accessories and footwear of a general nature. This definition however will be revised later.

These questions are chosen as the theoretical area is relatively new and undiscovered, which compels the present paper to be explorative in nature.
Specifically, the research questions will be investigated by first compiling, reviewing and assembling existing literature on product publicity in general (RQ1), and second by applying and extending the current knowledge to product publicity's influence on the attitude formation for fashion products (RQ2).

It should be noted to that this paper is based on observations from the American fashion industry, which serves as a point of reference throughout.

Due to the scope of this paper several preliminary delimitations must be made.

1.2 Delimitations

As will be evident, one of the main issues in the literature is the lack of a concise definition of the phenomenon as well as suitable delimitations from other concepts. In response to this issue such an isolation of the problem area will be implemented here.

The most commonly used term in the existing literature is *publicity*. However, this is a very broad term which cannot be covered in one paper. Also, it seems advantageous to delimit the area of study to a more concise phenomenon in order to avoid repetition of some of the problems of the existing literature. Therefore, based on the definition of publicity given above four delimitations will be made.

First, it is necessary to delimit publicity from the other elements of the communication mix. Kotler & Keller (2006), for example, divide communication platforms into six categories: advertising, sales promotion, events/experience, public relations, personal selling and direct marketing. Publicity typically belongs to public relations in this categorization.
Although this segregation seems intuitive, it is often violated by including for example events as publicity because they lead to media coverage (e.g. Lord & Putrevu 1993).
In order to avoid confusion, the categorization made by Kotler and Keller (2006) will be upheld, and events leading to media coverage will not be considered publicity, but rather publicity generating events. Similarly, advertising can create publicity, but just like a product can generate publicity, but is not in itself publicity. This paper thus only considers publicity in its purest and most simple form.

> Delimitation 1: This paper investigates product publicity as separate from other communication vehicles which may generate publicity. These will be referred to as publicity generating communication.

Second, it is not sufficient to proclaim to study publicity. Publicity can occur for products, services, brands, companies, and people alike. Including such different objects in one term will inevitably lead to a dilution of the concept, which is unfortunately already the case. Here, however, the following delimitation will be made:

> Delimitation 2: This paper will investigate only publicity for products referred to as product publicity.

Third, different media types have very different characteristics and different content types. Due to the scope of this paper, it is therefore necessary to delimit the study of product publicity to include only one general media type, thus:

> Delimitation 3: This study will consider product publicity in print media only

Fourth, even for product publicity in print media two very different kinds exists: positive and negative product publicity. This paper considers product publicity in a marketing perspective, where communication has been initiated by the company. The initiation by is likely to lead to positive or at least neutral product publicity if successful. Negative publicity would typically not occur based the initiative of the company but rather by the media itself or consumers, for example reporting on inconsistent quality or hazardous products. In addition, negative publicity belongs to a different discipline namely crisis communication.

> Delimitation 4: This paper investigates only positive (and neutral) product publicity in print media.

To facilitate readability, however, this will be referred to as product publicity or simply publicity.

In addition to these delimitations of the phenomenon, it is beyond the scope of this paper to include ethical considerations. The use of publicity raises some ethical questions primarily due to the fact that the consumer is unaware of the role of the company in placing the product, but also with regards to the ethics of the journalists who include semi-commercial material in their work. In turn, this can lead to legal issues, which is also beyond the scope of this paper

PART I: CURRENT APPROACHES TO PRODUCT PUBLICITY

The objective of this part of the paper is to investigate and assemble the existing literature in a comprehensive literature review concluding with an evaluation of how well the theory explains the influence of product publicity on cognition, attitude formation, and behavioral intent (RQ1).

2. Literature review

Three main issues arise when investigating product publicity (1) the fuzzy interface between marketing and public relations (PR), (2) the profusion of terms and (3) lack of definitions and delimitations. These issues will briefly be discussed.

For years, marketing and PR practitioners have had disagreements over the exact boundaries of the two disciplines (Kitchen & Moss 1995), an issue which is easily illustrated by two widely used definitions of marketing and public relations respectively.

The American Marketing Association defines marketing as: *"... the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large."(*American Marketing Association 2010)

Cutlip et al. (1985) define public relations as: *"the management function that identifies, establishes, and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the various publics on whom its success or failure depends."* (Cutlip et al. 1985 in Kitchen & Moss 1995).

The areas are clearly overlapping according to these definitions. Although the marketing definition has broadened over the years[1], and several interfaces can now be identified, communication to the consumer about products is still at the heart of the dispute. The question of which discipline product publicity pertains to consequently does not have an obvious answer.

[1] An earlier definition of marketing was: *"the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services, to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational needs"* (Kitchen & Moss 1995). In comparing the two definitions of marketing it becomes clear that marketing has expanded its boundaries over the years. An example of this is the field of relationship marketing (Tench & Yeomans 2007)

Kotler & Keller (2006) address publicity as part of the public relations functions. However, in their view public relations is part of the communication mix. PR is thus subsumed under marketing. Considering that public relations serves other purposes than communicating with the consumer this view, also known as the reductionist view of public relations (Kitchen & Moss: 1995), seems quite radical, and has reportedly caused *"near hysteria expressed in some PR circles about what is seen as an attempted takeover of the public relations function by marketing"* (Harris 1993: 13)

Looking instead at the public relations theories it becomes even clearer that the area of publicity might be quite the infant terrible of marketing and PR.

Tench & Yeomans (2007) propose a reverse view of Kotler & Keller (2006), defining marketing communication as part of PR:

"Marketing communication is aimed at supporting the sale of goods and/or services. This will include advertising, sales promotion, direct mail, personal selling, and market-oriented public relations ... [publicity]. Typically, this includes media relations and events." (Tench & Yeomans 2007: 29, insertion added)

Clearly, most of the mentioned functions are traditional marketing functions. The issue is illustrated in figure 1 below.

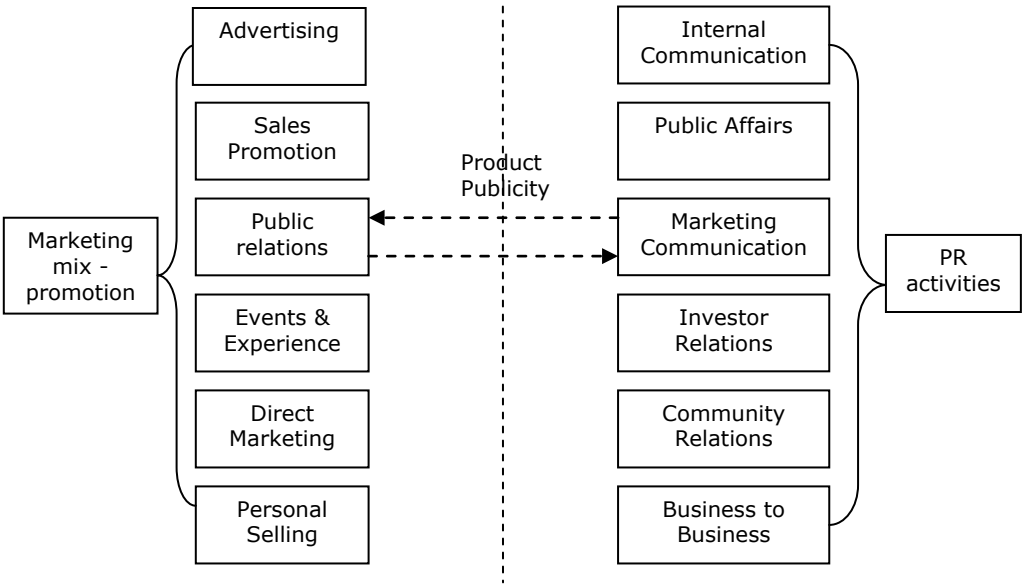

Figure 1: The interface between marketing and PR (Adapted from Kotler & Keller: 2006, and Tench & Yeomans: 2007)

Interestingly, in spite of the dispute over the interface between marketing and PR it appears that neither of the two are eager to claim the area of product publicity, each leaving it to the other. For example, a general tendency among PR practitioners as expressed by Reed (1974) is to ”*downgrade this corner of the forest [product publicity] as beneath their dignity, somehow sordid or at best a necessary evil”* (Reed 1974: 5, insertion added).

Several authors have called attention to the tense relationship between the marketing and PR functions, and how much would be gained by integration or cooperation (Reed 1974, Schwartz 1978, Lobsenz 1985; Harris 1993; Marken 1995).

The issue, however, is still present both in theory and practice, which can be illustrated with an example from Merims (1972) who reports on the planning, execution and measurement of successful product publicity campaigns. Among the companies investigated, three allocated the product publicity budget to the marketing budget, seven to the PR budget, and one to both.

The issue remains unresolved, and it may be the reason that literature on the subject is so limited, and perhaps as a consequence it is quite often expressed is that product publicity should instead be handled by experienced journalists (Abel 1994).

Insights into product publicity could therefore possibly be found in both the marketing and public relations theory as well as in theory of journalism.

A second issue, which is probably a consequence of the above mentioned points, is that the concept of product publicity suffers from a multiplicity of near synonymous terms for example *marketing support* (Reed 1974), *product publicity* (Merims, 1972, Schwartz 1978, Sitzman 1980, Stevens 1981, Marken 1987), *marketing-oriented PR* (Lobsenz 1985), *marketing PR* (Harris 1993, Marken 1995, Kotler & Keller 2006), *consumer information* (Reed 1974) etc. The term publicity, for example, spans over so many different instances of media coverage that it seems almost completely diluted and devoid of meaning. Adding insult to injury, there is a profound conflation of the word in popular language.

This makes the literature very chaotic and increases the difficulty of indentifying and compiling relevant literature. As will be evident this is not only a problem for the current paper, but has been for every writer on the subject, each failing to compile relevant research and theory. Consequently, no comprehensive literature review exists.

Although, it seems clear that these terms are synonymous or close to synonymous, they clutter the understanding of the phenomenon and needs to be narrowed down in order to facilitate a more concise conceptualization. This was attempted in the introduction to this paper, and the term product publicity was chosen for its ease of comprehension.

Lastly, there is no clear definition or delimitation of the concept product publicity and many authors simply leave out a definition all together. This complicates the matter further because many authors do not make appropriate distinctions between product publicity and for example advertorials and infomercials.

For the purpose of delimiting the literature review below, product publicity will be investigated in a more narrow sense than what has previously been the case (for example Hallahan 1999b). Hence, the review only includes theory and research on publicity which is *not* paid for corresponding with the definition made in the problem statement above. Hybrid of advertising and editorial content such as feature ads, advertorials and infomercials for which the sponsor pays are thus not included (Balasubramanian 1994).

2.1 PR accounts

As mentioned, the phenomenon of product publicity is nothing new and has been documented back to the 1950ies (Shaw 1957). However, the number of theoretical accounts are very limited, which has been observed by many authors (e.g. Merims 1972; Cameron 1994; Hallahan 1999a, Hallahan 1999b).

PR practitioners stand behind the earliest accounts of the phenomenon. The accounts are not theoretical but rather descriptive in nature.

Several reasons have been given for the popularity of product publicity among them the proliferation of media, audience fragmentation, publication specialization, shorter product lifecycles and relatively stable costs of product publicity as opposed to advertising (Marken 1995, Marketing News 1986).

A frequent misunderstanding, however, is that product publicity is free (Marken 1987). Although advertising is certainly more expensive, there are costs associated with securing product publicity. For in-house work, Merims (1972) including *"the salaries of personnel*

involved in the project apportioned according to the hours spent on the relevant activity, plus charges for travel, stationery, postage, entertainment and so on." (Merims 1972: 112), and Marken (1987) boils it down to the cost of *"the time and effort required to research the publications' target audiences as wells as the talent necessary to write a piece that meets the editors' requirements"* (Marken 1987: 28). At least for the fashion industry, one might ad the cost of the product samples used for photo shoots which the magazines often keep. In the American fashion industry outsourcing of the function typically happens on a monthly retainer basis which approximately costs $2,000 - $12,000 USD per month depending on the particular construction (White 2010).

An interesting area in relation to this is the problem of measuring product publicity results (Merims 1972, Schwartz 1973, Lobsenz 1985). The problem consists of measuring the effect on sales and of separating this effect of product publicity from other concurrent marketing efforts which presents an obstacle to quantifying the results (Merims 1972, Schwartz 1978). Results are thus often presented "*in scrapbooks of newspapers and magazine clippings"* (Merims 1972: 107), or by number of stories, size, and media reach (Walshak 1990, Schwartz 1978, Jo 2004). No appropriate measure has yet been found and Merims (1972) thus conclude that in the end even the quantitative measure becomes a matter of subjectivity.

Quality of product publicity however does not lend itself any easier to measurement, and is again a question of subjectivity (Schwartz 1978). As Merims (1972) point out *"There is difficulty, however, in comparing the value of publicity with that of advertising. For instance, publicity in the St. Louis, Philadelphia, and Miami newspapers may be only 50 %, as valuable as an ad in a national magazine; but publicity in* The New York Times *may be more valuable than any advertisement."* (Merims 1972: 112)

Most of the PR accounts, however, are concerned with how to attain and manage publicity by providing practical advice as well as appraisal of successful ventures (e.g. Merims 1972, Sitzman 1980; Stevens 1981; Lobsenz 1985; Marken 1987, Walshak 1990, Weaver 1991a, Weaver 1991b, Abel 1994).

For the most part they do not provide definitions or theory about product publicity, but treat it as implicitly understood phenomena. These articles are thus not of much use in the current context.

2.2 Marketing theories and empirical findings

Product publicity has largely been ignored as a serious research interest in marketing research, possibly because of its affiliation with public relations (Hallahan 1999a). Based on the reductionist view of public relations, however, marketing authors have shown some interest in publicity to the extent that it offers an alternative or a supplement to advertising when setting the communication mix.

The empirical studies conducted have thus focused on (1) the relative persuasiveness of publicity versus advertising or (2) possible synergies of using publicity and advertising together (integrated marketing communication, IMC). The latter is of less interest to this paper, but since the studies have contributed to the conceptualization of product publicity they are included in this review.

As a consequence of the unconsolidated nature of to the study of product publicity thus far, the findings of the empirical studies are summarized in table 1 below and will subsequently be discussed thematically. The review is produced in an attempt to contribute to this stream of literature with a comprehensive literature review, however due to the conceptual issues mentioned above this review cannot pretend to be exhaustive.

Article	Research variables	Material	Product(s)	Country	Relevant findings
Cameron (1994)	Independent var. Content type Delay Label Dependent var. Recognition memory Cued recall	Print article Print feature ad (Presented in a booklet)	Car among others un-identified products	United States	(1) Un-cued and cued recall is higher for articles than for advertising. (2) Respondents have a better memory of content than of content type. (3) The distinction between content types is not well captured in memory
Chew, Slater & Kelly (1995)	Independent var. Content type Brand familiarity Involvement Dependent var. Credibility Purchase intent	Print article Print ad (Presented in a booklet)	Bicycle CD player Typewriter software package	United States	(1) For familiar brands, the article is perceived as *more* credible under high involvement condition. Reverse for low involvement. (2) For unfamiliar brands, the article is perceived as *less* credible under high involvement condition. Reverse for low involvement.
Hallahan (1999a)	Independent var. Content type Argument strength Involvement Dependent var. Recall # cognitive thoughts Valence of thoughts Believability Attitude towards message Attitude towards brand Purchase intent	Print article Print ad (Magazine mock-up)	Shampoo, LI Soda, LI Batteries, HI Notebook, HI	United States	(1) No support for general superiority of news. The article outperformed advertising in believability only. (2) Individuals of both high and low involvement were affected by source cues. (3) People do not consciously process message type. (4) Attitude and purchase intent were the roughly same for strong arguments presented in either an article or ad and weak arguments presented in an article, but significantly lower for weak arguments presented in ads.
Hallahan (1999b)	*(survey conducted in conjunction with Hallahan 1999a study)*	-	-	-	(1) Respondents uniformly rate articles more favorable than advertising. (2) The article outperforms ads the most on credibility and trustworthiness.

Table 1: Summary of empirical findings

Article	Research	Material	Product(s)	Country	Relevant findings
Jo (2004)	Independent var. Content type Involvement Argument strength Dependent var. Message believability Attitude towards message Attitude towards brand Purchase intention Brand recall Attribute recall	Print article Print ad (Presented in booklet)	Computer, HI Printer, HI Cereal, LI Dishwashing liquids, LI	United States	(1) In terms of attitude toward the message, strong arguments had a greater impact than weaker arguments in articles. There was no such difference for ads. Suggesting that people pay more closely attention to articles. (2) Ads and articles had equal believability. (3) Brand recall was higher for messages presented in ads than in articles. (4) No support for content type acting as a peripheral cue and thus only having an impact under low involvement.
Loda & Coleman (2005)	(IMC) Independent var. Content type Exposure sequence Dependent var. Perceived credibility Message strength Attitude Purchase intent	Print article Print ad (Presented in a booklet)	Tourist destination	United States	(1) The article had significantly greater impact on perceived credibility and message strength than the ad. (2) The article had significantly greater impact on purchase intent, but not on attitude. (3) The publicity-then-advertising is the most effective sequence, while advertising alone is the least effective.
Wang (2006) *(conjunct with Wang & Nelson 2006)*	(IMC) Independent var. Content type Message Dependent var. Perceived trust Perceived message believability Attitude towards ad/article	Print ad Print article (Presented in a booklet and on a website)	Tennis racket	United States	(1) With both identical and varied messages, the article generated more perceived trust and a better attitude than the advertisement (2) Perceived message believability was the same for ads and articles with identical messages, but rose for the article under varied messages.

Table 1: Summary of empirical findings (*continued)*

Article	Research	Material	Product(s)	Country	Relevant findings
Wang & Nelson (2006) *(conjunct with Wang 2006)*	(IMC) Independent var. Content type Message Dependent var. Perceived information diagnosticity Purchase intent	Print ad Print article (Presented in a booklet and on a website)	Tennis racket	United States	(1) The article was more effective in terms of perceived information diagnosticity when messages are varied. (2) The ad was equally effective on perceived information diagnosticity in both conditions. However, in both conditions less effective than the article. (3) Purchase intent was higher for varied messages than for identical messages.
Rosengren (2008)	Independent var. Content type Brand familiarity Dependent var. Attention Processing Brand identification	Print article Print ad (Embedded in a newspaper)	Shampoo	Sweden	(1) Attention and brand identification was lower for the article than for the ad. (2) Respondents who attended to both message types processed the article more extensively leading also to a significantly better brand identification.
Verčič, Verčič, & Laco (2008)	Independent var. Content type Dependent var.: Message credibility Behavioral intent Attitude to subject of message	Editorial content Commercial content (TV and print)	Fundraising campaign for recovering drug addicts.	Croatia	(1)Editorial content was no more credible and did not have a greater impact on behavior and attitudes than advertising in both TV and print. (2) Media type had more impact on message credibility than message source. (3) Print ads were more effective in changing attitudes than print articles.
Kim, Yoon, Lee (2010)	(IMC) Independent var. Content type Exposure sequence Publicity valence Product attribute consistency Product involvement Dependent var. Believability Brand Attitude Attitude change	Print article Print ad (Presented online)	Laser printer, HI Car Insurance, HI Highlighter, LI Disposable batteries, Li	United States	(1) Believability of publicity was significantly higher than that of advertising. (2) Positive publicity combined with advertising leads to a more positive attitude than publicity or advertising alone regardless of the sequence. (3) Publicity following advertising leads to a greater attitude change than the reverse sequence.

Table 1: Summary of empirical findings *(continued)*

2.2.1 Third-party endorsement

"*Credibility is a unique advantage of publicity. The appearance of your message on an editorial page carries with it the implied endorsement of the editor.*" (Weaver 1991b: 39)

The assumption stated in the quote above, that a product receives an implied approval or endorsement of the medium in which it is presented, is at the nucleus of all research in product publicity, and is referred to as third-party endorsement (e.g. Cameron 1994).
The basic idea is that consumers believe that the media are unbiased gatekeepers of information (Jo 2004) and as a result that publicity in editorial content is rewarded products based on merit. This perception of the media can be ascribed to the standards of objectivity and ethics which editors in most Western cultures adhere to (Verčič, Verčič, & Laco 2008, Rotfeld & Lacher 1994). In principle, these standards prevent the publication of advertising content as editorial copy[2].

The effectiveness of this implied endorsement of the products carried is often ascribed to the media's ability to create awareness through agenda-setting, and to confer status (Wang 2006). However, only the agenda-setting ability has been proved to affect behavior (Hallahan 1999b), a role which entails that the media as gatekeepers of information (Cameron 1994) decide what is of relevance and interest to the readers and thus the consumers.
Most of all, however, the effectiveness of third-party endorsement is attributed to the concomitant credibility; *"…with the appearance of 'news,' an advocacy message is legitimized by third-party credibility – the implicit approval of the medium in which the information is presented."* (Cameron 1994: 186-7)
In other words, the medium lends credibility to the message.

Only the credibility aspect has been subject to research in relation to product publicity.

[2] Today however journalists are increasingly pressed for time and therefore often accept pitches and ideas from PR agencies, because it allows them to comply with their deadlines. In addition journalists have an interest in being up to date with the activities in the markets which they cover (Tench & Yeomans: 2007).

2.2.2 Source credibility

The literature produced on product publicity focuses on the characteristic feature that product publicity is expected to be superior in credibility over advertising, and thus in terms of the persuasive effectiveness (Chew, Slater, Kelly 1995). This is also the consensus among practitioners, and it has been claimed that publicity is up to seven times as effective as advertising due to the difference in credibility (Cameron 1994, Kotler & Keller 2006, Williams 1985, Williams 1988).

The assumption is based on the view that through third-party endorsement a media lends its credibility to the product, and that third-party endorsements are more credible than endorsements from first-person sources (Jo 2004).

Credibility for the purpose of this paper is understood as expertise and trustworthiness. Expertise is understood as the ability of the source to make valid assessments, and trustworthiness as the willingness of the source to make valid assessments (McCracken 1989). Authors have used a variety of different definitions and terms such as trustworthiness (e.g. Cameron 1994) and believability (e.g. Hallahan 1999a).

The factors that have been proposed to cause this difference in credibility between a first-person source and a third-party source generally fall within four different categories:

- Personal gain
- Intent to persuade/manipulation
- Reporting bias/bias of source
- Control of message

Personal gain refers to the fact that contrary to editorial copy an advertiser has an interest in the success of the product, and expects a return on the investment made to advertise.

As a consequence, the advertiser has intent to persuade, whereas editors are bound by standards of objectivity (Cameron 1994). Advertising is thus thought of as manipulative, as opposed to editorials which are seen as non-manipulative (Chew, Slater, & Kelly 1995). Chew, Slater & Kelly (1995) argue that if the consumer is sophisticated enough to know that advertising is made with an intention to persuade, and continuously is aware of that fact, then advertising must be perceived as less credible.

Again as a consequence, the information transmitted in advertising is perceived as biased, and even though the consumer may find the advertiser to be an expert they may question the willingness of the advertiser to provide accurate information (Chew, Slater, & Kelly 1995: 13). Conversely an independent source is not considered to have reporting bias. When the consumer perceived a reporting bias then credibility and effectiveness will decline (Chew, Slater & Kelly 1995)

Lastly, because the advertiser pays for the media space consumers believe that advertisers can say anything they want (Chew, Slater & Kelly 1995:5) which combined with the reporting bias makes the message less credible.

Notably, not all authors actually test whether product publicity is perceived as more credible than advertising although their research rests upon the argumentation above (e.g. Cameron 1994, Wang & Nelson 2006).

Hallahan (1999a) finds that publicity outperforms advertising on the measure of believability (self-reported degree of skepticism/incredulity) and in Hallahan (1999b) respondents rate the article as more credible than the ad.

Similarly, Loda & Coleman (2005) finds publicity to be perceived significantly more credible than advertising and Kim, Yoon, & Lee (2010) find articles to be more believable than advertising.

Chew, Slater, & Kelly (1995) find that articles are perceived as more credible than advertising only when the brand is familiar and involvement is high, or when the brand is unfamiliar and involvement is low.

Wang (2006) finds perceived trust to be higher for the article than the ad, but believability to be the equal.

However, Jo (2004) does not find believability (trustworthiness and expertise) be different for advertising and product publicity and Verčič, Verčič, & Laco (2008) find no difference in message credibility either.

In conclusion, most studies point in the direction that publicity is perceived as more credible, which in turn should make the message more credible too. Credibility may have been underestimated because most of the authors use the same message in both content

types. As suggested by the findings of Wang (2006) believability may be higher for publicity articles when messages are varied.
In conclusion, the results are thus inconsistent.

2.2.3 Persuasion and source cues

Several of the empirical studies explain the effectiveness of product publicity in terms of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Cameron 1994, Chew, Kelly, & Slater 1995, Hallahan 1999a, Hallahan 1999b, Jo 2004, Wang & Nelson 2006, Verčič, Verčič, & Laco 2008).

In brief, this model proposes that different methods of persuasion are more effective in changing attitudes depending elaboration likelihood of the consumer (Petty, Cacioppo, & Shumann 1983). Elaboration is understood as *"engaging in issue relevant thinking"* (O'Keefe: 2002: 138).
The model prescribes two different routes of persuasion depending on the involvement of the consumer, where involvement is understood as *"a personal relevance that leads to the greater likelihood of heightened processing of information"* (Chew, Slater, & Kelly 1995).

When the consumer's involvement is high, persuasion will happen through the central route where consumers carefully consider the information that they feel is central to the product (Petty, Cacioppo, & Shumann: 1983). In other words, the consumer engages in extensive issue-relevant thinking (O'Keefe 2002).
When involvement is low, persuasion will occur through the peripheral route persuasion occurs because of that *"the attitude issue or object is associated with positive or negative cues – or because the person makes a simple inference about the merits of the advocated position based on various simple cues in the persuasion context."* (Petty Cacioppo & Shumann: 1983: 135). In this case, the consumer uses simple decision rules (heuristics) to evaluate the message and guide attitudes (O'Keefe 2002).

According to the ELM, source characteristics, such as credibility, are more effective under low involvement and argument quality is more effective under high involvement (Petty, Cacioppo & Schumann: 1983). Accordingly, if the consumer bases his decision on

peripheral cues such as source characteristics, the model assumes that only little elaboration occurred (O'Keefe 2002).

However, Cameron (1994) among others claim that "*under certain conditions, prior cuing of the source …can serve as a 'central' processing cue*" (Cameron 1994: 194).

A similar point was also made by Petty, Cacioppo & Schumann (1983) who found the attractiveness of an endorser of shampoo to be a product-relevant argument thus having an impact under high involvement conditions too (Petty, Caciopo & Schumann: 1983).

Meanwhile, processing does not occur either through central route processing or peripheral route processing for all products. They are idealized extremes of a continuum on which a product can be placed (O'Keefe 2002).

Hallahan (1999a) hypothesizes in accordance with the ELM that source will affect message processing (recall and number of thoughts), message evaluation (valence of thoughts and believability) and message effectiveness (attitude towards message and brand, and purchase intent) under low involvement only, and includes argument strength as a cue expected to have impact under high involvement conditions. That is, he tests if source is a peripheral cue.

He finds no support for this hypothesis; both consumers with high involvement and consumers with low involvement are affected by the source. This finding also occurred in Chew, Slater & Kelly (1995) and in Jo (2004).

Hallahan (1999a) explains his findings with consumers having a processing-bias towards editorial content, where as Chew, Slater & Kelly (1995) explains it by the highly involved consumer yielding to someone with more expertise than themselves.

2.2.4 Information-processing bias

Another factor that has been proposed to contribute to the superiority of publicity over advertising is that consumers process different content types in different ways, which is what Hallahan (1999a) refers to as information-processing bias. Different categories of content, e.g. editorial, advertising, or entertainment, has different rules governing the relation between the message sender and the audience, and will therefore be processed differently by the consumer (Hallahan 1999a).

The assumption is that consumers are predisposed to pay more attention to editorial content because it is the editorial content they actively seek (Rosengren 2008, Hallahan 1999a), and that they will therefore process the information more thoroughly (Cameron 1994, Hallahan 1999a). This is known as the intentional exposure hypothesis (van Reijmersdal, Neijens & Smit 2005).

It is assumed that the more processing the consumer engages in the better memory of the message and product (Cameron 1994).

A difference of opinion exists between those who believes the processing of content class to be conscious (Cameron 1994, Chew, Slater, & Kelly 1995) and unconscious or pre-attentive (Hallahan 1999a). This was only tested by Hallahan (1999a) and results showed that the source was not processed consciously.

With regards to attention and processing, Rosengren (2008) found than if the consumer paid attention to an article, processing was higher, leading to better brand identification. However, advertising was better at grabbing the attention of the consumer, and as a result overall advertising resulted in better brand identification than editorial content.

Cameron (1994) found that news was processed more extensively than advertising and thus recalled better. Contrary, however, Hallahan (1999a) found no difference in brand name recall, attribute recall, and number of cognitive thoughts for news and advertising.

Jo (2004) even found brand recall to be higher for brand names presented in advertisement although attribute recall was the same.

Meanwhile, Hallahan (1999a) did find that cognition was higher for news about low involvement products than for news about high involvement products, but roughly the same in each condition for advertising. This led him to conclude that consumers might shut down processing altogether when the message was presented as advertising

In addition, he found argument quality to interact with content class. Weak and strong arguments performed alike for news, but for advertising a weak argument led to a less favorable evaluation. This suggests that consumers are more discerning when it comes to advertising and that a possible heuristic evaluation on the part of the consumer leads to acceptance of weaker arguments because they are presented in editorial content. The opposite, however, was found by Jo (2004).

In conclusion, there is some support for an information-processing bias favoring editorial content, but the results have not been unanimous.

2.2.5 Attitudinal effects

Hallahan (1999a) found no support for articles being universally more persuasive than ads, although he does find that the favorability of the attitude was more sensitive to the strength of arguments presented when arguments were presented in advertising than in news.

Loda & Coleman (2004), however, found no differences in attitude toward the subject of the message for advertising and news and Verčič, Verčič, & Laco (2008) found advertising to create a more favorable attitude towards the subject of the message.

Jo (2004) finds attitude towards the message to be more susceptible to weak arguments when the argument was presented in the news. Advertising elicited roughly the same attitude regardless of argument strength, suggesting perhaps that people pay more attention to the news.

Wang (2006) found that attitude toward the content type was more favorable for the article, and when consumers were asked to evaluate news and advertising in Hallahan (1999b) news were rated more favorably too.

Thus, while consumers may evaluate articles more favorably, the effects on attitude towards the subject of the message, and message acceptance are inconclusive.

2.2.6 Conative effects

Similarly, most of the studies have failed to validate the superiority of editorial content over advertising in terms of conative effects (Chew, Slater & Kelly 1995, Hallahan 1999a, Jo 2004).

The only study to find effects on purchase intent is Loda & Coleman (2005) who finds a significantly higher purchase intention when the message is presented in an article.

2.3 Shortcomings of current literature

It is clear, that the literature thus leaves a lot to be desired. The inconclusiveness of results suggests that the relation between content type and cognitive, attitudinal and conative effects is more complex than expected by the authors, and thus that some important

moderating factors may have been overlooked perhaps due to the lack of theorization and conceptualization in advance of empirical testing.

A fairly obvious defect that has not been detected is that the credibility of publicity cannot be generalized. The authors seem to believe that, other things being equal, publicity in *any* publication will have more credibility than advertising in the same publication. However, the very premise of the source credibility argument in this context is that the source of the publicity message is the publication and the source of the adverting message is the company. Therefore the credibility of the publicity relative to advertising will differ depending on the credibility of the medium, because the credibility of the medium primarily affects the editorial content, while the credibility of the ad remains constant. This observation has two important implications.

First, some publications are perceived as more believable and objective than others. For example *The Wall Street Journal* is very well-reputed and generally perceived as credible whereas the gossip magazines, such as *Life & Style,* are known to publish baseless rumors and is therefore perceived as less credible. Conducting a comparative study in *The Wall Street Journal* and *Life & Style* respectively is thus likely to generate very different results in terms of the credibility of editorial content relative to advertising. This was also noted by Merims (1972) (see section 2.1), but has not been included in any research.

Second, even when comparing to sources of high believability and objectiveness, some sources have more credibility on certain issues than others, because they are perceived as having expertise. Publicity about the fashion trends of the season published in *Vogue* and in *Good Housekeeping* will be perceived as having different levels of expertise and consequently different levels of credibility.

The medium in which the publicity and the advertisement are published is thus very relevant to any study of publicity, because the credibility of the advertisement stemming from the company is the same regardless. This is supported by the finding of Verčič, Verčič, & Laco (2008) that the media type (TV or print) had more impact on credibility than the content type.

In addition, other characteristics than the credibility of the source have not been investigated.

A second factor that has been neglected is product type. Most of the tested products are utilitarian in nature. However, the only authors to address this choice are Kim, Yoon & Lee (2010) who explain: *"we chose utilitarian products over hedonic products because the process of consumer attitude formation for utilitarian products is relatively more straightforward"* (Kim, Yoon & Lee 2010: 103).
The only studies that diverge from this tendency are Loda & Coleman (2005) who tests on tourist destinations, and Verčič, Verčič, & Laco (2008) who tests on a fundraising campaign. Neither of them addresses the product type and characteristics in terms of to the effect on product publicity. This also neglects the issue that some products lend themselves more easily to publicity than others, for example home furnishing products and garden products (Brabender 2005). However, it seems highly likely that product type will affect the results, which has also been mentioned by Wang & Nelson (2006) and Rosengren (2008).

A third factor, is the fact that all the studies assume that advertising and publicity conveys the same information, and that it is thus only the layout and source that changes relative to advertising (Chew, Slater & Kelly: 1994: 20, Hallahan 1999a: 294). In reality, this is not likely to the case, because of the editing of the editorial staff and the lack of control of the company (Chew, Slater & Kelly 1995). In addition, a brief review of different publications would reveal that there are many different kinds of editorial content which includes products. Publicity thus varies a great deal in format and content, which makes generalization difficult. There is a big difference, for example, between a news feature about computer software and the inclusion of a shoe in a fashion spread. This fact, however, has largely been ignored, and the empirical studies all investigate product publicity in a news format thereby neglecting all other forms of editorial coverage (Rosengren 2008).

Based on this review, it seems that there exists a gap between the PR accounts, which are specific in nature and includes no theoretical considerations, and the marketing accounts, which are general and theoretical in nature, but appear too far removed from the actual

phenomenon as it appears in practice. In addition, the fact that all studies are comparative delimits the possible research directions.

In order to bridge this gap the next part of this paper will incorporate the mentioned moderating factors (i.e. source, product and content characteristics) in order to explain product publicity for fashion products.

PART II: PRODUCT PUBLICITY FOR FASHION PRODUCTS

As mentioned in the introduction, the second objective of this paper is to investigate how product publicity works in terms of attitude formation for fashion products.
This will be investigated by looking first at the fashion product and types of publicity in fashion magazines. Based on this analysis, it will be investigated if and how product publicity is likely to influence attitude formation.

Although practitioners have highlighted the assumption that product publicity is especially beneficial in for fashion products no theories have been produced (e.g. Shaw 1957).
For example, White (2005) simply states that: *"...editorial endorsement generally carries greater weight than an obvious ad something clearly found in the cosmetics and fashion markets"* (White 2005).
It is generally well-accepted, however, that the character of the product influences consumer behavior (e.g. Hoyer & MacInnis 2007), but as mentioned this aspect has been ignored in the literature of product publicity. In order, to understand the influence of product publicity on the attitude formation for fashion products it is thus necessary to investigate the product at hand.

3. Characteristics of the fashion product

As mentioned the American market for women's fashion apparel is chosen as a point of reference for this purpose. The analysis of product publicity in fashion magazines will thus be based on observed occurrences of the phenomenon in American fashion magazines. An analysis of the industry, however, is beyond the scope of this paper.
In the United States, the most important apparel categories are (sorted after decreasing sales in billions in 2007); tops ($35,1), bottoms ($25,7), tailored clothing ($13,4), intimate apparel ($10,6), outerwear ($4,7), sleepwear ($3,6), hosiery ($3,0), swimwear ($2,8), apparel accessories ($2,4) and fleecewear ($2,2) (Guideline 2009).
The most important accessory categories are (sorted after decreasing sales in 2007); earrings, handbags, chains/necklaces, bracelets/anklets and rings (Guideline 2009). In

addition to these categories, footwear is considered a fashion product under the definition applied to this paper.

The entire market was estimated to approximately $330 billion for apparel and accessories and $60 billion for footwear. Approximately 65% of this market value is women's wear (Guideline 2009).

Due to globalization, the fashion industry in the United States is international in nature. New York City has become one of the primary fashion capitals of the world (together with Paris, Milan, London and Tokyo) and the fashion capital of the United States (White 2010). This has lead to an increased internationalization of the American fashion industry and thereby its products (Guideline 2009). American fashion designers sell their products internationally and most international designers likewise sell their product in the United States (or at least in New York City). As such no noteworthy differences exist between the products marketed in the United States and most other Western cultures (although tastes may differ), and no specific introduction to is therefore necessary.

3.1 The dynamic of conflicting needs and contextual dependence

Although most people have spontaneous understanding of what fashion is, it is in fact a highly complex cultural phenomena for which no accepted standard definition exists. This actually seems to be somewhat characteristic of the fashion product which has been described as: *"a cultural phenomenon, especially of a symbolic or mythic kind, [which is] curiously resistant to being imprisoned in one ... 'meaning'"* (Wilson 1985 in Barnard 2008: 11).

This characteristic dynamism of fashion has been explained by sociologist Georg Simmel.

Two tendencies in a individual are prerequisites to the existence of fashion in a culture; (1) the individual's need to be part of a larger whole, and (2) the individual's desire to be considered as apart from a larger whole (Georg Simmel 1971 in Barnard 2009).

In other words, the consumer has the conflicting needs of all at once feeling the need for union (a socializing impulse) and the need for isolation (a differentiating impulse).

If, for example only the socializing impulse is present, as is the case in some less complex societies[3], then clothing will be more or less stable or fixed. Since there is no encouragement of individualism, there is only the felt need to adapt and thus nothing to drive a change in the prevailing way of dressing. In such a society fashion does not exist (Barnard 2009).

However, in Western cultures which are generally more complex and consists of different subgroups both the need for socialization and the need for differentiation are present. The individual feels a need to signal belonging to a subgroup of society, while at the same time signal individuality (typical to distinguish themselves from the other members of the subgroup they associate with). According to Simmel, fashion represents a way in which these conflicting needs can be negotiated (Barnard 2009: 13).

The two conflicting needs give fashion its transformational character. It is not unimportant, however, whether the change occurs in time or in space. Psychoanalyst John Flügel makes a distinction between fixed clothing and modish clothing. Fixed clothing varies in space but not in time and is associated with a particular locality. An example of a relatively fixed dress is priests' vestments or Norwegian folklore dresses which are still widely used for festive occasions. This type of clothing's primary function is to represent and reinforce continuity and tradition (Barnard 2009).

Modish clothing on the other hand varies little in space because it is not tied to a locality and is disseminated quickly. However, it varies greatly in time, because it changes rapidly. Modish clothing is predominating in the Western cultures, and this type of clothing represents discontinuity and change (Barnard 2009).

However, this classification is not intrinsic in the clothing. In other words, the function of clothing and what it represents is completely dependent on the context (Barnard 2009). For example it frequently happens that folklore prints and dresses come into fashion, and are thus suddenly worn by some people as modish clothing rather than fixed clothing.

[3] Simmel called this "*primitive societies*" by which he meant societies which do not consist of identifiable sub-groups, as opposed to what he calls *"civilized societies"* which is does consist of such group. This potentially offensive terminology has been abandoned by later theorists (Barnard: 2009).

The same is true in terms of the socializing and differentiating impulse. Which one of these functions a piece of clothing symbolizes is completely dependent on the context in which it is used.

3.2 The temporal dimension of fashion

In the descriptions of fashion clothing above, the phenomenon spans over all the clothes people in Western cultures wear in their everyday lives. However, in order to comprehend the publicity of fashion magazines this must be specified to include only the type of fashion covered by these magazines. Not all clothing is covered by the fashion magazines at the same time rather fashion magazines cover only the advancing and prevailing trends of fashion clothing (Tungate 2008).

The following quote can encapsulate the fashion products of magazines as:

"…anything that is of the moment and subject to change; it's anything that members of a population deem desirable and appropriate at a given time" (Rath et al. 2008: 5-6)

Rath et al. (2008) use this as a definition of fashion, but it really defines the concept of something being *in fashion* or being *trendy*. All fashion clothing in Simmel and Flügel's terminology has the possibility of being trendy. However, a trend is a momentary thing, and subject to change, and not all clothing is trendy all of the time.

Fashion trends are replaced at a much faster pace than general clothes. For example, while many people may wear a denim jacket regardless of whether or not it is a current trend and this piece of clothing is likely to be worn for many years to come. However, it will at certain points in time be deemed trendy by consensus in the fashion industry and get a short peak in sales and coverage in fashion magazines.

Fashion is thus not only dependent on the special context but also on time. In terms of pace, fixed clothing changes at the slowest pace, fashion clothing a little faster, and fashion trends change at the fastest pace.

This is easily observed in the seasonal character of the year in the fashion industry.

In the American fashion industry the seasons are spring, summer, fall, resort, and winter/holiday. While some larger fashion houses market clothes for all these seasons, the primary seasons for which collections are released are spring and fall. So at least once every six months the entire product line is replaced (White 2010).

The spring and fall collections mark the emergence or new trends, and the replacement of old ones. Trends however can last for a couple of seasons and can thus last anywhere from a couple of months to several years.

The changing nature of fashion and the importance of trends are exemplified by the following statement:
"The moment is the indicator of all that is important, valued, and wanted by consumers (whether it be symbolic or functional, real or perceived)" (Rath et al. 2008: 6)
At the extreme, the momentary nature of trends in fashion makes change and news value of items a quality in itself. Such novelty and rapid changes as well as the proliferation of styles and mass consumption are characteristics of the Western patter of fashion consumption (Thompson & Haytko 1997).

In general, the lifecycle of fashion apparel is thus quite short, with new products constantly brought to market, and this puts demands on consumers who want to keep up with fashion trends. This observation was supported by a study conducted by McCracken and Roth (1989) who found that consumer in general had much greater difficulty in interpreting clothing that was new and fashionable. This suggests that consumers who want to keep up with fashion trends, needs to exert effort in order to keep up and transition into new trends.
The adaptation of fashion trends in the American fashion industry was estimated as follows in 2008; 12 % stay on cutting edge, 28 % adopt before most, 40% are slow to change and 20% rarely change (Guideline 2009).

From heron out, fashion and fashion clothing will be understood as clothing which is considered trendy by the fashion industry at a given point in time, while all other types of clothing will simply be referred to as clothing.

3.3 The communicative dimension of fashion as cultural symbols

As mentioned in section 3.1 fashion is used to satisfy the need for expressing socialization and isolation, and the products are thus symbolic in nature. In addition, it is often said that the meaning consumers derive from a product is much more important than the product itself, and that consumers therefore purchase not functional products but meaningful

products (Carroll 2009). Or put more moderately, that products have a social meaning in addition to its functions (Levy 1959).

This postmodern approach holds that consumption is embedded in symbols and images, and that consumption acts as a social. Fashion products are seen as strong symbolic vehicles of expressing the consumer's self-image.

For such symbolic products the judgments an individual or a group holds about a product often become more important than the product itself and the attitude towards the product thus becomes paramount (Vernette 2004).

In order for a product to be function as a symbol people need to be able to read and understand it. As stated by Levy (1959) the assumption is that "*consumers are able to gauge grossly and subtly the symbolic language of different objects, and then to translate them into meanings themselves."* (Levy 1959: 120).

The purpose of the McCracken & Roth (1989) study referenced above was to investigate if clothing like language has a code which allows consumers to communicate with others through what they wear, the same way they communicate with others through words and sentences.

The study confirmed the existence of such a code. The knowledge, however, was distributed very unevenly between consumers of different demographic groups making it a much less effective way of communicating than language. Younger females without children were in general the most knowledgeable about the code of clothing (McCracken & Roth 1989)[4]. A possible reason for the somewhat impaired understanding of clothing may be the fact that what clothing actually communicates is entirely dependent on the context, as explained by Flügel (Barnard 2008). It is thus important what a piece of clothing is worn with or photographed with, who is wearing it and so on.

In conclusion, fashion is a symbolic product characterized by a dependence on the context in which it appears as well as the temporal nature which creates changing trends. Through

[4] This is easily explained by (1) the importance of group membership in adolescence and the repercussions hereof (2) the fact that women culturally are encouraged to pay more attention to clothing than men and (3) the demands and time consumption of childcare (McCracken & Roth 1989)

fashion clothing the consumers signal either socialization with or isolation from certain groups in their culture. Consumption of fashion products is thus what Carroll (2009) calls *"a process of self-reference, self-identity and self-articulation*" (Carroll 2009: 148)

The existence of a code for interpreting fashion has been proven. Compared to language it is more unevenly distributed and understood, which can at least partially be explained by the contextual and temporal fickleness of fashion.

4. Characteristics of product publicity in fashion magazines

In order to asses the impact of product publicity on the attitude formation of consumers for these products, it is now necessary to illustrate how product publicity occurs in the American fashion industry.

4.1 Fashion magazines

Although only the third most important medium (following TV and newspapers) there is an abundance of magazines in the United States. In fact in 2006, an estimated 19,419 magazine titles were published (Green 2007).

Only product publicity in fashion magazines will be considered here. A fashion magazine is understood as magazines which have a primary editorial interest in fashion.

Several of the fashion titles are niche magazines tailored to for example the Hispanic market (e.g *Latina*) the African American market (e.g. *Essence*), geographic areas (*e.g. Gotham, Ocean Drive*), teens (*e.g. Seventeen, Teen Vogue*) and brides (*e.g. Brides Magazine, Elegant Bride, Modern Bride*) (White 2010).

Here, only the monthly consumer magazines which cover women's wear in general will be considered, thus excluding the aforementioned niche magazines and excluded business-to-business magazines, although especially *Women's Wear Daily (WWD)* is an important influencer in the fashion industry (Tungate 2008). These limitations are necessary in order to establish a more homogenous pool to draw samples from.

The primary titles are thus *W, V, Elle, Vogue, InStyle, Cosmopolitan, Vanity Fair, Harper's Bazaar, Marie Claire, Glamour and Lucky (*see fact sheets in appendix 1) (White 2010). These magazines differ in their degree of specialization in fashion, for example *V* and *W* are quite specialized in fashion and the arts, while *Marie Claire* and *Cosmopolitan* cover several different aspects of the life of younger women.

The magazines of course also differ notably in their reader demographic, and in the other topics covered in the editorial content which affects their images. For example *W, V* and *Vanity Fair* have a more cultural and intellectual image, while for example *Lucky* and *Cosmopolitan* is clearly is designed for younger women. The mesh of issues make some magazines a one-stop source of information for some readers, which of course extends their influence.
In terms of how they cover fashion, or in other words, the kinds of editorial content, they are quite homogenous.

It should also be noted some editors, stylists and photographers obtain celebrity status within the fashion industry. Examples of such quasi-celebrities include the editor *Anna Wintour* (editor-in-chief of *Vogue*) who was allegedly the inspiration for the character of *Miranda Priestly* in the motion picture *The Devil Wears Prada*, the stylist *Rachel Zoe* who now has her own reality show *The Rachel Zoe Project*, and the French fashion photographers *Patrick Demarchelier* who was also referenced in *The Devil Wears Prada* (Wikipedia 2010a, 2010b, 2010c). Such high profile editorial staffers contribute to the image of the magazine.

4.2 Editorial content

Fashion journalism is primarily concerned with trends, and is therefore at least to some extent subjective as opposed to fact-based. Perhaps as a consequence writers in fashion magazines are not referred to as writers, but as editors, thus emphasizing the process of selecting the products and the presentation more so than the process of actually conveying information (White 2010).
Another characteristic of fashion journalism is that it is non-critical. No equivalent of food critics, book reviews or product tests exists for fashion, and it is extremely rare to find critical remarks in fashion magazines. This does not mean that fashion magazines indiscriminately include anything in the editorial content, but rather that criticism comes indirectly in the form of exclusion (Tungate 2008). As stated by Nicholas Coleridge, managing director of Condé Nast in the United Kingdom:
"*Vogue and other fashion magazines don't exists to be overly critical; although they can criticize by exclusion. Our job is to cover trends. The editors themselves choose the*

clothing they want to present on the editorial pages, and the stylists have considerable room for manoeuvre." (Tungate 2008: 131)

This is a consequence of the fact that the inclusion of a product in the editorial pages carries a positive recommendation in itself, and excluding a product or designer is thus a way of expressing criticism (Barthes 1992).

As mentioned earlier several different types of editorial content can be identified by examining magazines and newspapers. Marken (1987) identifies six categories of articles that a company can strive to attain industrial product publicity in. For consumer markets the following three are of relevance:

- Editorials, i.e. an opinion-piece from the editors.
- Industry and product round-ups in which a series of products are brought together under a shared theme.
- Approach-to-problem articles, which informs consumers about how to choose or use a product.

When looking at the selected fashion magazine all these types of editorial content certainly exist. In the beginning of each magazine you typically find a letter from the editor-in-chief introducing the new issue, and often the magazines features a page with the monthly product choices made by the editorial staff which includes photographs of the products as well as a short description and pricing information. These editorial types are of less relevance here, since the endorsement is obvious, and because it is a personal recommendation rather than a more general recommendation from the magazine.

Figure 2 Product page and trend page from Elle Magazine September 2009

In fashion, product round-ups generally occur as one-pagers with a selection of products represented in photographs and accompanied by short texts and sales information. The concept of the page is made typically made explicit in a short introduction below the headline. Primarily two variations exist; trend pages, see the right-hand side of figure 2 and product pages, see the left-hand side of figure 2.

Fashion magazines also contain approach-to-problem articles, typically how-to-wear, in which the editors guide the reader in dressing in a certain trend, for a certain event or for a certain budget. In figure 2 this approach-to-problem feature has been incorporated into the product page to the left.

Figure 3 Fashion Spread from Elle Magazine September 2009

In addition to these types, an important feature in most fashion magazines which is distinctive for the fashion industry is the *fashion spread* in which stylists, photographers and editors collaborate on a more artistic and imaginative representation of important trends, see figure 3. These fashion spreads highlight a very important aspect which is that fashion is considered art, at least by the fashion industry (Tungate 2008).

It is important to note that this type of editorial is only possible because fashion is a visual and symbolic product and because the products relate closely to their everyday ritualized use (how it is worn) (Domzal & Kernan 1992). Such spreads would not occur in magazines for consumer electronics for example, but can also be observed in decorating magazines such as *Architectural Digest*.

An important feature of all these publicity types compared to advertising is that they feature multiple brands together, were advertising typically features just one brand and sometimes only one product.

A curiosity in relation to fashion spreads is that advertisers can actually imitate these spreads quite closely without having to label it advertising as is the case with advertorials. Consider for example the two-page ad for the clothing brand *Rock and Republic* in figure 4.

Figure 4 Rock and Republic ad featured in Elle Magazine 2009

In general, both authors and readers of magazines have had difficulties in distinguishing between editorial content and advertising for product round-ups (e.g. van Reijmersdal, Neijens & Smit 2005). The same results would be expected to be the case for fashion spreads.

The fashion magazines include other features as well, but the ones mentioned here are the most prominent and those in which product publicity most often occurs (White 2010). News features and designer profiles, for example, are typically near impossible to get a product featured in. The magazines also regularly include celebrity style features, and it is an increasing trend to use celebrity actors and actresses instead of models on the cover and in fashion spreads (Carroll 2009).

5. Attitude formation for fashion products

As explained above attitudes about fashion products are especially important because the meaning attached to a fashion product is more or equally important as the physical qualities. The meaning of the fashion products helps the consumer either socialize or

individualize their appearance, and these functions center around general evaluation of the product in the different subgroups of society.

An attitude is understood as the *"overall evaluation that expresses how much we like or dislike an object, issue, person, or action"* (Hoyer & McInnis: 2007: 125). Attitudes thus guide our thoughts and feelings, and can to some extent predict purchasing behavior, which makes it a central concept in the understanding of consumer behavior (Hoyer & MacInnis: 2007).

Consumers form attitudes by processing information available to them. The extent to which they process information and the kind of information they will process depends on their level of involvement with the attitude object. This is the central premise of dual-processing models such as the Elaboration Likelihood Model, which was described in section 2.2.3.

Although originally devised for advertising, the model is useful for the study of product publicity too. Based on knowledge of the product and the consumer, the ELM can indicate which information the consumer will process and base their attitude on and thus answer the question of how product publicity affects the consumer attitude formation.

In order to use the model, however, it is first necessary to investigate whether readers of fashion magazines have high or low product involvement. In accordance with the personal relevance theory, product involvement was, for the purpose of this paper, defined as a person's perceived relevance of the product based on inherent needs, values, and interests (Chew, Slater & Kelly 1995, Hallahan 1999a: 299, O'Keefe 2002).

The level of product involvement thus depends on the needs, goals, and values of the consumer. When an action is consistent with the consumer's needs, goals, and values, then the action will be perceived as personally relevant, and the consumer will be motivated to either approach or avoid that action (Hoyer & MacInnis 2007).

The level of involvement for a particular product thus varies across consumers as needs values, and goals vary. For the purpose of this paper, however, it is necessary to generalize about the involvement of the reader of fashion magazines. The generalization will be based in the consideration of the fashion product above.

5.1 Needs satisfied by fashion

As was explained in the previous sections, fashion satisfies the need for expression socialization and the need for individualism and is thus a vehicle of self-expression. This is true for both clothing in general and for fashion clothing.

It is important to understand that these needs are completely social in nature, in that they depend on the presence of other people. That is, you socialize *with someone*, and you individualize yourself *relative to someone* (Hoyer & MacInnis 2007).

Other needs can be satisfied by the fashion product too. Many women, for example, consider shopping a leisurely activity suggesting that it is considered entertainment, which may also be true for reading fashion magazines (Guideline 2009). In addition, fashion seems to satisfy the need for variety/novelty and to avoid boredom (Guideline 2009).

These hedonic needs satisfies the consumers general need for sensory stimulation, however they are not social because they do not depend on the presence of other people (Hoyer &MacInnis 2007).

Also, clothing satisfies a functional need for example of keeping you warm and covering certain parts of the body. Again this is also a non-social need.

The social or non-social nature of the needs are important in the context of fashion, because while clothing in general can satisfy all the above-mentioned needs, fashion clothing primarily satisfies social needs because the fashion product is a social construct. The concept of a fashion trend, as something which is deemed desirable *by someone* at a given point in time, stresses that trends are social phenomena. For example, a sweater in a trendy color will keep you warm no more than one in a less trendy color.

So even though the needs can coexist, and fashion clothing obviously can also cover the body, it is fair to assume that fashion products primarily satisfy the social-symbolic needs, as opposed to clothing in general which may be bought primarily for its satisfaction of any of the mentioned needs. This is also the prevailing assumption in the fashion industries, as expressed by Rath et al. (2009): *"we use fashionable items primarily to make statements about ourselves, our tastes, our values, our identities, our aspirations – that is, the way we want others to see us"* (Rath et al 2009: 5).

Support for this assumption is found in the study by Laurent and Kapferer (1985) which shows that consumers generally believe that their choice in clothing signals something to the people around them. In addition, they find that people attach an emotional value to their clothing which indicates that consumer when evaluating these products use subjective rather than objective criteria such as taste, pride, desire for adventure, and desire for expressing themselves (Bhat & Reddy 1998). Thus highlighting the symbolic and hedonic needs.

5.2 Product involvement and the reader of fashion magazines

The primary needs satisfied by fashion products are thus emotional, social and symbolic in nature. In order for the consumer to be motivated by them and thereby feel involvement with the product category, the needs must to have personal relevance.

Since fashion is a socially visible and expressive product, it is likely that personal relevance for most people will be high because of the social risk that accompanies it (Hoyer & MacInnis 2007; Laurent & Kapferer 1985). Because fashion products express social identity, they serve as a yardstick on which other can be judged (Auty & Elliot 1998).

Furthermore, it seems especially intuitive that readers of fashion magazines will have relatively high involvement with the product category of fashion, because they have actively sought out external information regarding these products.

In addition, it has been suggested that the consumer's tendency for self-monitoring can be used as a substitute for product involvement for fashion products (Auty & Elliot 1998). The concept of self-monitoring is defined as the degree to which consumers look to others for cues on how to behave (Hoyer & MacInnis: 2007: 382).

Involvement with fashion the fashion product is thus associated with differences is sensitivity to social surroundings. Those who are highly motivated to fit into a particular group will most likely also be very involved in fashion products, as the need to stay aware not only of the cues of the desired groups but also of the other group, so they can avoid wrong cues (Auty & Elliot 1998, Barnard 2009).

In terms of fashion, high self-monitors, or chameleons, will adapt to the environment and thus be likely to follow trends, while low self-monitors, or leopards, are less affected by their surroundings and will almost never change the way they dress (Auty & Elliot 1998;

Carroll 2009). Products which can express the consumer's self-image are thus most important to chameleons (Carroll 2009).
Leopards can thus not be expected to express much interest in reading fashion magazines about the changing trends. Consequently, consumers who read fashion magazines can generally be assumed to be quite high self-monitors and thus have a high involvement with the product category.

These considerations lead to the conclusion that readers of fashion magazines have high involvement with the product category of fashion clothing. This was supported by the research of Laurent and Kapferer (1985). They investigated different products in terms of importance of negative consequences, perceived risk, emotional value and sign value. Among the different products dresses were rated highest in sign value, emotional value and importance of negative consequences, and third in perceived risk making it the product with the highest product involvement of all the researched products.
The aspect of risk also affects the involvement of the consumer. Consumers generally feel that an action is risky when they are uncertain about the consequences of that action. In light of the research of McCracken & Roth (1989) who found that consumers have some difficulties in interpreting fashion clothing as symbols such an uncertainty is likely to exist.
The fact that consumer generally think of fashion as a high risk product heightens involvement (Hoyer & MacInnis 2007, Hallahan 1999a). These findings are expected based on the analysis above.

This conclusion is not foolproof however. Fashion magazines are not read only by the consumer who purchases it. As an example *Vanity Fair* is on average read by 6.26 readers per copy, see appendix 1. This suggests that consumers of lower involvement levels with fashion may also read the magazines, for example in the waiting room at the doctor's office or at the hairdressers. These consumers may not pay much attention or be very involved in the product category or the magazine, because they only read it to pass time.
Also, it is a possibility that the consumer does not feel involvement with the product category, but rather with the magazine, but most likely with both, since fashion magazines primarily cover fashion products. Had this paper included fashion publicity in news papers

and gossip magazines there would most likely be a greater variation in the product involvement of the readers because the content is much more diverse.

5.3 Moderators of involvement - elaboration relation

Even a consumer with a high involvement in fashion products may not always exert a lot of effort when generating attitudes. In other words, other factors can influence whether the central route or peripheral route to persuasion is predominant.

5.3.1 Complexity of information

In order for the consumers to engage in central route processing, they need to have the ability and opportunity to do so. Ability and opportunity are related to the consumer's knowledge, education, and age as well as other factors which are distinctive of the individual consumer. However, the ability to process information also depends on the complexity of the available information, which again depends on the product (Hoyer & MacInnis 2007).

Although fashion clothing does not have technical specifications, a different kind of complexity is present. As mentioned above McCracken & Roth (1986) found clothing to be difficult to understand. This may well be caused by the fact that the symbolic nature of fashion is context dependent, and thus ambiguous. The changing nature of clothing and especially fashion clothing imposes difficulties for the consumer in learning to interpret the symbols correctly at a given point in time.

In addition, the visual nature of fashion products gives the consumers numerable possible interpretations (Barthes 1992).

5.3.2 Self-congruity

One of the functions of fashion and other symbolic products is that they help the consumers define and maintain the way they think about themselves (Levy 1959). They are means of self-articulation and expressing their self-image (Carroll 2009). People tend to behave in a way which is consistent with his or her self-image, or put differently in a self-congruent or self consistent manner (Carroll 2009: Johar & Sirgy 1991).

It has been suggest that for symbolic or value-expressive products the route to persuasion is moderated by a self-congruity process (Johar & Sirgy 1991).

Self-congruity is understood as *"the match between the product's value-expressive attributes (product-user image) and the audience's self-concept"* (Johar & Sirgy 1991)
The product-user image is defined as the stereotype the consumer has about the typical user of the product (Johar & Sirgy 1991). Clothing is especially susceptible to differences in such consumption based stereotypes or brand user images because they are highly visible and expressive products (Auty & Elliot 1998). This creates a high-social-consequence context, which enhances the importance of self-congruity to the consumer (Carroll 2009) and attitude formation for fashion products is thus likely to be affected by self-congruity as proposed by Johar & Sirgy (1991).The model for attitude formation is pictured below in figure 5.

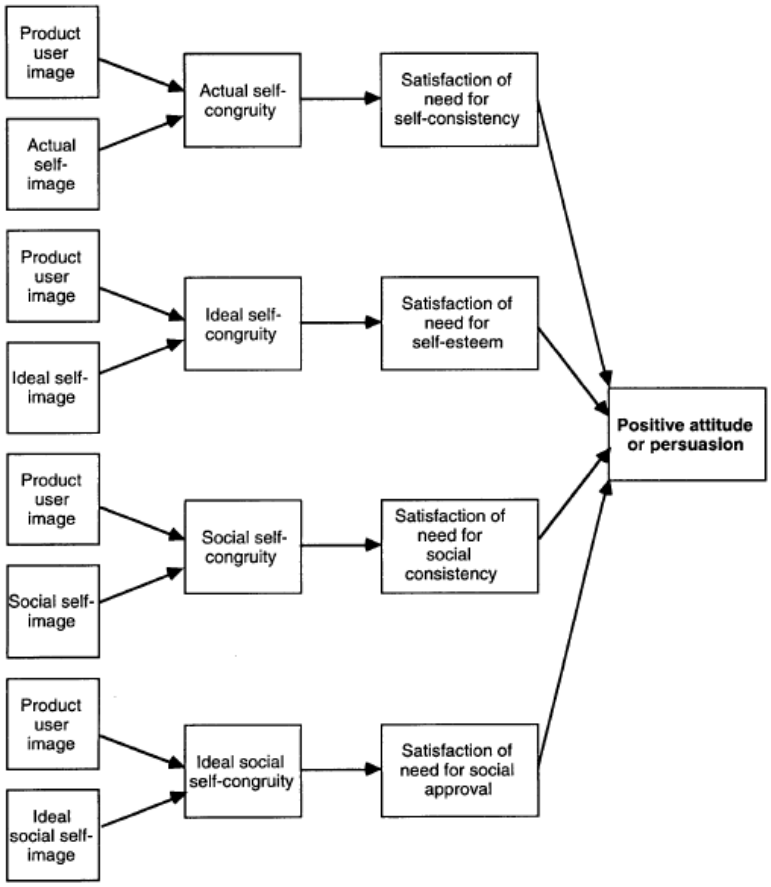

Figure 5: Model of attitude formation for value-expressive products (Johar & Sirgy 1991: 25)

Concretely, the consumers self-image consists of (1) the actual self-image or the image the consumer has of himself (2) the ideal-self image or the image the consumer aspires to have,

(3) the social self-image or how the consumer believes that others see him, and (4) the ideal social-self-image or the image the consumer wants others to have of him (Johar & Sirgy 1991).

Congruity between the brand-user image and these self-images will in turn lead to satisfaction of (1) the need for self-consistency, (2) the need for self-esteem, (3) the need for social consistency, and (4) the need for social approval respectively. Satisfaction of these needs will lead to a positive attitude towards the product (Johar & Sirgy 1991).

When the consumer evaluates the congruity between product user image and these self-images, the source is likely to play an important role, thus moderating the importance of source cues in a high involvement context as the present. Johar and Sirgy (1991) write that:

"the self-congruity route to persuasion can be viewed as a psychological process in which the audience focuses on source cues and matches these cues to their self-concept (actual, ideal, social, and/or ideal social self-image). The greater the match of the source cues, the greater the probability of persuasion, and vice versa." (Johar & Sirgy 1999: 26)

When a consumer reads a fashion magazine, the magazine is thus expected to act as an indication of the product-user image, which the consumers compare to their self-image. Based on this comparison, the consumers form their attitudes.

The consumer is thus expected to apply the image of for example *Cosmopolitan* as a substitute of for the product-user image, which will then determine the favorability of attitudes.

In conclusion, although readers of fashion magazines are highly involved in the product category and thus as a rule likely to follow the central route to persuasion, they are likely to be primarily affected by source cues because of the self-congruity moderation. In addition, the context of a piece of fashion clothing is important for the understanding. An indication of the plausibility of these assumptions was found in a survey, which investigated the purchase behavior of American women. Results revealed that 53 % of American women often make fashion purchases on impulse (Guideline 2009), which is typically an outcome with low-effort consumer behavior based on emotions (Hoyer & MacInnis 2007).

5.4 Source effects of product publicity

Having established that consumers' attitude formation is likely to be affected by source cues, these will be investigated here. The empirical studies have yet only considered one aspect of the source namely source credibility.

5.4.1 The traditional source models

The primary characteristic of editorial copy is that it is written by a third party (Chew, Slater & Kelly: 1995: 8), which has been investigated in the literature above.

However positive such an endorsement, the source still has paramount importance in terms of the influence it holds over the consumers' attitude formation.

The image of the medium is thus theorized to influence the reception of the message in accordance with the statement by Marshall McLuhan that: "*The medium is the message"* (McLuhan 1966 in Grønholt, Hansen & Christensen 2006: 118) and as indicated by Levy (1957) *"there is a world of symbolic difference between such periodicals as say, Look, Popular Science, and Harvard Business Review"* (Levy 1959: 123).

The current theory of product publicity builds on the premise of the source credibility model. However, several other models have been proposed to describe the influence of sources. These are the source attractiveness model, the match-up hypothesis and the meaning transfer model. These will briefly be reviewed in order to asses their usefulness.

It should be noted that the models are often used to explain celebrity endorsement. As was explained earlier the editorial staff of fashion magazines sometimes reaches celebrity status within the industry. Additionally the magazines themselves can be perceived as having a product-user image which resembles that of a celebrity.

As celebrity endorser has been defined as *"any individual who enjoys public recognition and uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good"* (Carroll 2009: 150). Editorial staff and the magazines themselves will typically enjoy such recognition. In addition, it is stressed that it is generally believed that a celebrity endorser should be knowledgeable, experienced, and qualified in order to be successful in promoting a brand. The same is also likely to be true for magazines and editors (Carroll 2009).

In conclusion, it is thus argued that the models can be used for any type of third-party endorsement including product publicity.

The two original models explaining the influence of sources are *the source credibility model* and *the source attractiveness models*, which are often referred to as simply *the source models*.

The premise of the source credibility model is that the more credible the source of the message is, the more effective the message is (Carroll 2009). When a message comes from a credible source, the consumer accepts the source influence in terms of their own values and attitudes. This process is referred to as *internalization* (Erdogan 1999). As mentioned, this model has been implicitly used in all of the product publicity studies to date, and it has been proved that it does not have the necessary explanatory power.

The premise of the source attractiveness model is that consumers tend to form positive stereotypes about attractive people, thus for example believing that they are nicer, happier and more intelligent than less attractive people. This is referred to as *the halo effect* and can be explained by the consistency theory which states that people prefer that their judgments about an object or a person are consistent with one another. Thus when ranking a person high on attractiveness, the consumer feels more comfortable for example with also ranking that person as highly fashionable or intelligent too (Erdogan 1999). The more attractive the source is perceived to be, the more effective the message (McCracken 1989).

The attractiveness of a source is established based on three characteristics: similarity, familiarity and/or likability (McCracken 1989, Carroll 2009). The more supposed resemblance between the consumer and the source, the more attractive, because people tend to like people who are considered similar to themselves. Similarly, the more familiar the consumer is with the source and the more positive affection the consumer holds about the source, the more effective it is in delivering the message (McCracken 1989; Erdogan 1999). Where the source credibility model worked through internalization the source attractiveness model works through *identification*. Identification happens when information from an attractive source is accepted as a consequence of the consumers desire to identify with the source (Erdogan 1999).

Although fashion magazine are filled with attractive models and images this model does not seem to be able to explain product publicity either since the source of publicity messages is not the models but the magazine[5]. The attractiveness of magazines can be viewed as a bundle of meaning just like that of a celebrity, which the source attractiveness model cannot explain. In addition, source credibility is generally more effective than source attractiveness (Carroll 2009).

Both of the models have been confirmed by research and some of the effectiveness of third-party endorsement can thus be ascribed to credibility and attractivity of the source.

The models implicitly assume that persuasiveness of endorsed messages has to do only with the endorser and not for example with the product (McCracken 1989). However, the differences of endorsers and sources go deeper than their attractivity and credibility and the models are thus necessary but not sufficient to understand product publicity. As is the case in the present context, McCracken (1989) concludes that the research is *"littered with puzzles and peculiarities the source models cannot explain"* (McCracken 1989: 311).

It is interesting to observe that even though these models have thus been criticized for lacking explanatory power for celebrity endorsements, they are uncritically used for product publicity.

Another important issue is addressed in the match-up hypothesis, which elaborates on the effectiveness of different sources by stating that a source is only effective where a match between the product and the source exists. The hypothesis follows *the social adaptation theory* which states that the adaptive significance of information will determine its impact. For example, an attractive sources work better when the product endorsed is used to enhance ones attractiveness, as was the case with the shampoo example mentioned above (Petty, Cacioppo & Schumann 1983, Erdogan 1999). This supports the assumption made in section 2.3 that different sources will be more credible for certain products.

If there is not a match between the source and the product the consumer will tend to be suspicious of whether the source was paid (Erdogan 1999). If a fashion magazine thus

[5] It should be noted that attractivity does not only refer to physical attractiveness, but also personality for example.

includes a product that is clearly out not in keeping with the tone and style of the magazine it may loose credibility in the eyes of the consumer.
Although this model provide information about how to choose a source when pitching for publicity for a product it does little in explaining the influence of the source.

5.4.2 The meaning-transfer model

By far the most useful model of source influence is the meaning transfer model put forward by McCracken (1986, 1989). This is generally accepted as the model which comes closest to explaining the reality of source influence (Carroll 2009). As opposed to the source models and the match-up hypothesis, this model is meaning-based.
The meaning-based models of communication prescribe that the content types delivers to the consumer an understanding of the *meaning* of the product (Domzal & Kernan 1992). In the meaning-based model the source helps consumers make sense of their surroundings. Like a dictionary the sources of information helps the consumer learn cultural meanings (Domzal & Kernan 1992).

As was argued earlier fashion products are symbolic products. The meaning transfer model can explain how the products get their cultural meaning. The basic idea is picture in figure 6 below.

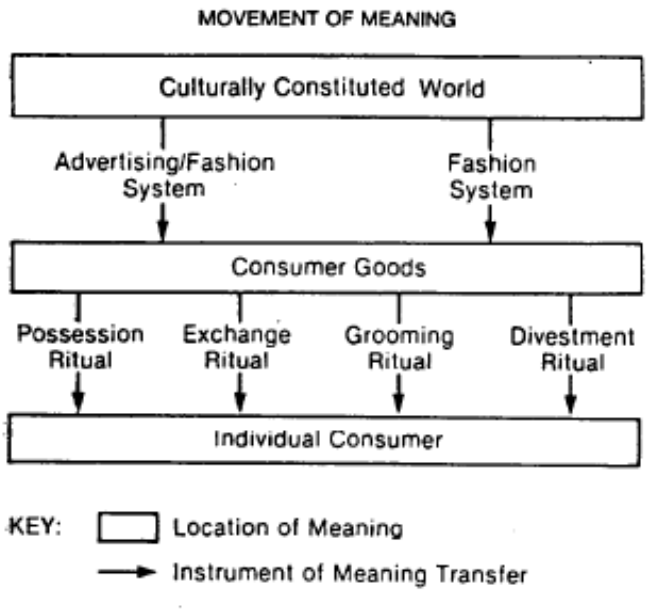

Figure 6: Movement of meaning (McCracken 1986)

The basic premise of the meaning transfer model is that through a three-step process meaning is transferred from the culturally constituted world to the product and lastly to the consumer.

In the culturally constituted world, cultural categories and cultural principles exist. Cultural categories are *"the fundamental coordinates of meaning… representing the basic distinctions that a culture uses to divide up the phenomenal world"* (McCracken 1986: 72)

Examples of such cultural categories include concepts such as gender, age and time. Based on cultural principles we can categorize and make sense of observations in our surroundings.

Visual products are a way of expressing the categorical scheme of a culture (McCracken 1986) and clothing, for example, can be categorized as either *"feminine"* or *"masculine"*. Other examples of cultural categories include festivity, which for fashion is typically associated with more vibrant and colorful styles than clothing which is acceptable for work which is often more conservative.

In order to asses whether a piece of clothing is masculine or feminine, the consumer has cultural principles which guide this classification. Cultural principles can be described as organizing ideas which allow all cultural phenomena to be distinguished, ranked, and interrelated (McCracken 1989).

Returning to the masculinity/feminity example, women's clothing is often more delicate, and the color pink is also often considered feminine.

When consumers incur a piece of clothing they automatically categorize it based on the cultural principles they have learnt. The cultural principles and categories reside in the culturally constituted world, and the meaning a piece of clothing carries is thus a product of the consumers' culture (McCracken 1986).

Consumers in turn acquire this meaning, for example, by owning the product (possession). Owning transfers meaning onto the consumer, or to the consumers extended-self which consists of self (me) and possessions (mine) (Carroll 2009).

New products, however, are unknown to the consumer in terms of their meaning. New products thus need to have meaning transferred to them from the culture, a process which happens seasonally for fashion goods.

The interesting thing in the context of product publicity is that a product can acquire meaning in several different ways. McCracken first proposed this model in a general form and explicates that the celebrity endorsement interpretation is only part of a more general process of meaning transfer, thus opening up to the possibility that other types of third-party endorsement can be explained through the model (McCracken 1989, 1986). Also, he stresses that the model is valid for both implicit (the endorser uses the product) and explicit (the endorser recommends the product) endorsement modes as well as a co-present mode, where the endorser simply appears with the product (McCracken 1989). The product publicity observed in fashion magazines could be any of the three types depending on the concrete editorial type.

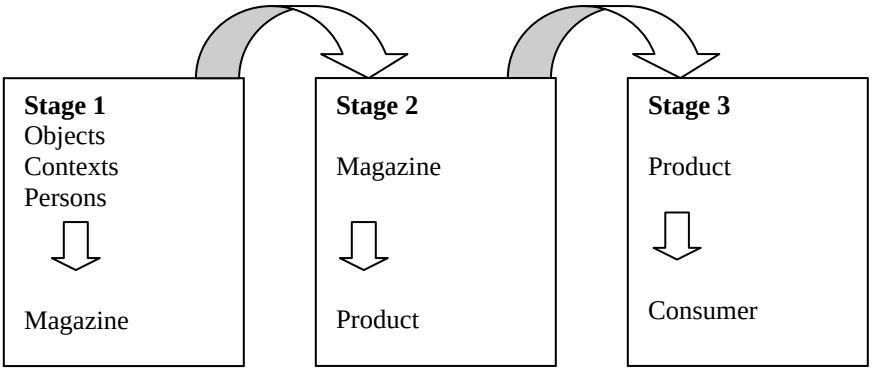

Figure 7: Transfer of meaning from magazines to consumers

Figure 7 shows the meaning transfer process adapted from celebrity endorsement to the third-party endorsement of fashion magazines.

In the first step the magazine acquires meaning from objects, contexts and persons. In the celebrity endorsement model, this step typically involves transfer of meaning from the actresses' movie roles to themselves, or from the sports teams of athletes to the athletes themselves.

For magazines it seems likely that the products they feature, the models and celebrities they hire as well as the topics they cover will transfer meaning to the magazine creating sustaining the product-user image for the magazine. Through this process meaning is created for the magazine in terms of class, status, gender, age, personality and lifestyle of the magazine itself or the reader stereotype. To illustrate this consider for example the slogan of the magazine *Cosmopolitan* which is *"Fun, fearless, female"* (www.cosmopolitan.com). Such a statement gives clear guidance to the editorial selection and thus affects the products features, the topics covered and consequently the meaning transferred onto the magazine.

In other words, the editorial production is guided in such a way that product selection is congruent with the product-user image or the reader stereotype and consequently that the products, contexts, persons and themes transfer hopefully the desired meaning onto the magazine.

Similarly in the second step, meaning is transferred to the individual product from the magazine and the context created within it. Through the written word and the overall content of the magazine they give meaning to fashion clothing and ensembles of fashion clothing (Barnard 2009).

In the third step, the consumer performs the same construction of self which the magazine did in the first step. McCracken points out that the celebrities who acquired meaning in the first step of his model serves as an example for consumers when they acquire meaning in the third step (McCracken 1989). Consequently, he refers to celebrities as *"super-consumer"* a notion which is also easily connected with the fashion magazines (McCracken 1989, Carroll 2009).

Magazines serve as an example of how to consume fashion products, as observed by Barnard (2009):

"one way of looking at these magazines is to see them as offering advice on what to communicate and how to communicate it" (Barnard 2009: 96)

The magazines thus provide the consumer with an example of how to communicate through clothing, and what to communicate if congruity with the brand-user image is the desired outcome. They thus guide the consumers interpretation of how others dress, provide them with an understanding of how to communicate their self-concept, and provide meaning to clothing which can be used to associate or dissociate with the stereotypical reader of the magazine.

There is thus a constant exchange of meaning between the objects, contexts and persons included in the magazine, and the magazine itself. One the one hand the magazine obtains meaning from the overall content, on the other the content obtains meaning from the magazine. Both the magazine and the objects featured accumulate meaning on an ongoing basis through this process. This interrelationship was suggested by McCracken (1989) to exist for products and celebrities, and it thus likely to also occur for products and other endorsement types such as product publicity.

It is important to stress that each step entails *partial* transfer of meaning. It is thus not the entire meaning attached to a magazine or a product that is transferred on to the other (McCracken 1989).

The meaning transfer model is much more sophisticated than the source credibility model applied thus far. Although it has been devised to explain celebrity endorsement, it is evident that is has equal explanatory power for other types of third-party endorsement.
Looking at product publicity one from the perspective of credibility is a rather flat and deflated way to consider it several other factors may play a role. A more full view of product publicity is arranged simply by changing the source model used. A consequence of the meaning transfer model is that it takes a broader scope than the other models. It looks not only at the attractiveness or the credibility, but at the meaning which is transferred.
Although all products have a certain meaning in the consumer culture, some products are more prominent symbols such as fashion products. The meaning transferred onto these products from the consumer culture is thus important to consumers, and fashion magazines play an important role in this process of meaning transfer.
As the source of the product message, the magazine like advertising transfer meaning onto the product. The effectiveness of the endorsement process depends on the meanings the magazine brings to the process. In terms of attitude formation, the magazines serve as a cue of the product-user image of the brand. Meaning from the magazines own product-user image is transferred to the product user image of the fashion product. In turn, the consumer uses the cue to assess whether congruity exists with their self-images, which will determine the evaluation of the product.

5.5 Content characteristics

In the light of the contextual dependence which characterizes the fashion product it is thus necessary to consider the internal context of publicity messages in fashion magazines a little further.

As was evident above, the primary characteristics of the editorial content of fashion magazines is that it puts the product in a context with several other products or brands and

that it is primarily visual in nature. These content factors will be reviewed briefly. A more thorough analysis of these factors is beyond the scope of this paper as such an analysis pertains to the theories of semiotics, visual and textual discourse analysis, and is to some extent overlapping with the premises of the meaning transfer model.

5.5.1 Internal context effects

As mentioned above, the meaning transfer takes place both from magazine to product, but also within the content of the magazine. The context of a message is defined as "*all aspects of an environment presented concurrently with a stimulus and that modulate the control exerted by other stimuli*" (Hallahan 1999a: 296).

The meaning transfer prescribes that companies through advertising with a celebrity endorser has to create an ad that is filled with objects, contexts and copy which has the same meaning as the endorser (McCracken 1989).

For the content of fashion magazines, the process is described above and happens through the guidelines of editorial selections. A self-reinforcing environment is thus created almost automatically in the editorial content of a magazine. Certain products and themes are deemed to match the product-user image and reader profile. The meaning transferred from the magazine to each product is thus reinforced among products, themes and persons. In other words, the objects, contexts and persons in the ad affect each others meaning while simultaneously being affected by and affecting the meaning of the magazine. In the context of celebrity endorsement this was explained by McCracken (1989): *"an advertising campaign can sometimes have the effect of a new dramatic role, bringing the celebrity into contact with symbolic materials that change the meaning contained in their persona"* (McCracken 1989: 316).

For products with a known meaning, the change of meaning, however, is likely to be modest as the products are chosen to reinforce the editorial style of the magazine, and thus already have quite similar meanings, but for new products which characterize the fashion industry the effect is more prominent.

As such the product publicity system of meaning transfer is also one in which *"meaning is constantly being in circulation"* (McCracken 1989: 318-319).

Such effects have received some attention in advertising research. The phenomenon is here referred to as spill-over effects and have been investigated both for within context effects and source effects (van Reijmersdal, Neijens & Smit 2005).
The spill-over effect is thus said to occur when positive characteristics assigned to a source, leads to an increase in the number of positive characteristics assigned to the message object. It is known as the *"spill-over effect"* because it is theorized that the positive characteristics of the medium spill over to the content. In other words, an appreciated context will spill over to commercial messages embedded in the context (van Reijmersdal, Neijens & Smit 2005). Research has shown that the more intertwined an ad is in its carrier the more positive are the consumer responses (van Reijmersdal, Neijens & Smit 2005).

The effect also occurs in terms of attitudes. When the consumer evaluates a magazine positively (positive attitude) the likelihood that the advertisement is positively evaluated (positive attitude) increases as well. Particularly this as be proven correct for affective attitudes, and is then called *excitation transfer* and happens when the positive feelings generated by one object can be transferred to another (van Reijmersdal, Neijens & Smit 2005). Similarly a positive mood create by a context can be transferred to the object (van Reijmersdal, Neijens & Smit 2005).
A positive evaluation of a context can be transferred to an object when the evaluation of the context is more salient.

5.5.2 The visual nature of the message

The content of fashion magazines is primarily visual and there are thus not explicitly product relevant arguments. Barthes (1992), however, contends that the inclusion of a product in a fashion magazine is automatically positive product coverage or a recommendation, which is also the viewpoint of practitioners in the fashion industry (Tungate 2008).

As mentioned earlier, this visual nature of the product publicity messages in fashion magazines may be difficult for the consumer to understand.
In his work *Système de la Mode,* the French sociologist Roland Barthes investigates fashion writing from a seminological perspective. Although his work has received much criticism,

it is useful to the purpose of this paper in that he identifies three functions of the descriptions that accompany the photographs in fashion magazines, what he calls written fashion (Barthes 1992).

The first function is fixation. Images inevitably involve several levels of perception, the reader of the image can choose any level of perception (even if he does not know it) and each time one looks at an image such a choice is made. Language eliminates this freedom, and uncertainty. The words choose instead of the eye, or as Barthes puts it:

"the image freezes an endless number of possibilities; words determine a single certainty… it arrest the level of reading…" (Barthes 1992: 13).

As such the themes accompanying product pages, trend pages, and fashion spreads helps the consumer focus on one symbolic interpretation of the product

The second function is exploration. Language makes it possible to deliver information that the image cannot, it adds knowledge, be it about the material, the designer, the brand etc. The text, thus, ad an authoritative voice of someone who knows about the product, which makes it possible the create fashion: *"Knowledge of fashion is not without its price: those who exclude themselves from it suffer a sanction: the stigma of being* unfashionable. *Such a function is obviously possible only because language, which sustains it, constitutes in itself a system of abstraction."* (Barthes 1992: 14)

Fashion magazines can thus deem something fashionable or trendy. This may in part of the explanation of the fact that customers sometimes rely heavily on the authority of certain publications (Schwartz 1978). As an example a survey conducted in 2008 showed that while 62 % of women got their clothing ideas from fashion magazines, celebrities and TV, only 28 % answered that they got their ideas from commercials and ads (multiple answers were possible) (Guideline 2009).

The last function is that of emphasis. Often the text duplicates elements which are clearly visible in the iconic representation. From the ensemble the commentary can single out certain elements in order to stress their value. It can thus explicate certain elements. The language thus gives a fragmented representation of the ensemble; we are told certain parts and spared others. The limits of the written garment are not material, but of value. The parts that are told are given an absolute value. The language decides what is essential and what

of accessory value. Similarly, as it has been argued, the inclusion of a piece of clothing in fashion magazines expresses an absolute value, or recommendation (Barthes 1992).
The emphasis has two functions (1) it revives the general information of the picture and (2) it renders intelligible the reasons which makes an organized whole out of a collection of detail, description as an instrument of structuration. The garment is unveiled in a certain order, which implies certain goals (Barthes 1992).
This corresponds with the argument made previously that fashion magazines tell the consumer how to communicate and what to communicate.

5.5.3 Product descriptions

Fashion discourse is defined as *"a complex system of cultural meanings that are encoded in the ways of talking about fashion"* (Thompson & Haytko 1997: 15)

It is generally accepted that there are two types of fashion discourse (1) the glamorizing discourse and (2) the trivializing discourse.
It is clear that fashion magazines use only the glamorizing discourse which entails a idealize world of dreams, fantasies, as opposed to the everyday lives of consumers. This can also be referred to as imaginative hedonism or escapism which allows the consumer to escape realities for a while as they read magazines (Thompson & Haytko 1997, Barnard 2009). This may suggest that some consumers, for example consumer with a relatively low income, will read magazines as a form of entertainment, such emphasizing the satisfaction of hedonic needs.
However, it places the product in the context of an idealized world and thus opens up to the possibility of a meaning transfer from this imaginative world to the product, and later the consumer.

Also, an interesting feature of the descriptions of fashion products in magazines is that it includes sales information, which makes the endorsement somewhat more direct. Cameron (1994) hypothesize that *"it is entirely possible that if more explicit influence such as product-ordering information were to pass through the editorial screen and appear in news stories, then the modest advantage found here for a third-party endorsement would*

diminish… The effectiveness of publicity might be curvilinear, with explicit influence dampening publicity's credibility" (Cameron 1994:204)

In light of the above mentioned point that magazines are perceived as "super-consumers" guiding the reader through symbolic process of consumption such an effect would not be expected for fashion publicity however.

6. Limitations

The theory put forward here should be considered as limited to symbolic and visual products, but may very well be extended to and tested on other product of this type, for example furniture and design. Also, the focus has been on the symbolic needs satisfied by these products, and thus considered the functional and hedonic need satisfaction only to a lesser extent.

Also in relation to delimitation three, certain limitations stem from the focus on magazines in terms of the effects of product publicity. Although magazines are in general credited to be able to target narrowly, elicit high audience involvement, to be non-intrusive nature and have long shelf life, several drawbacks exists in terms of measuring exposure (Green 2005). First, the inclusion of an advertisement or product publicity does not guarantee that the reader is exposed to the message because the consumers are at liberty to flip through the pages however they like, and second, that each magazine is typically passed on from reader to reader resulting in more readers to account for over an even longer period of time. The latter issue is referred to as the time it takes to build readership, which on average has been estimated to three months (Green 2005).

A further difficulty arises when measuring sales effects for fashion products, because magazines are always ahead market and the consumer thus does not have the opportunity to buy the merchandise immediately after reading the magazine (White 2010).

These factors add to the difficulty of measuring product publicity as described in the literature review, and a study to confirm the effectiveness of product publicity is thus needed.

The theory of this paper is also limited by the fact that the effects considered and attempted to be explained were short term effects on attitude towards the product or message. There may however very well be long terms effect, not for the product, but for the brand which has not been considered here (Merims 1972).

Lastly, an underlying assumption of this paper is that consumer can actually distinguish between the editorial content of magazines and advertisements. This however had yet to be confirmed empirically.

7. Future research

The theory put forward in this paper will benefit from empirical testing in the future. I addition, in the future research on product publicity several of the points made here must be taken into account.

First a concise and expedient conceptualization and theorization must come before the actual empirical research.

Second, there is a need to test the characteristics of publicity against one another, thus for example testing the same message presented in publicity of various kinds. For fashion it could be the inclusion of a product in a fashion spread, trend page, and product page respectively testing the persuasiveness of each format.

Third, as has been evident that credibility has also been seen as a general feature of all publicity outcomes, however, it seems necessary to distinguish between the different media types as well as the individual media in their in terms of credibility. It seems intuitive that a fashion magazine will have greater credibility for endorsing fashion products than a gardening magazine, but different media may have different credibility for different consumer groups.

Specific to the fashion industry future research may also include the more indirect ways of obtaining publicity namely through product seeding with celebrities who are often featured in articles fashion magazines.

8. Conclusion

The objective of this paper was to examine the concept of product publicity as an influencer of attitude formation for the purpose of explaining why it is such a prominent a communication platform in the fashion industries.

First, the current literature was reviewed and assembled. It was demonstrated that vital parts in our understanding of product publicity are yet to be explored. The existing theory is incomplete and inconclusive, thus not providing an empirically established explanation of product publicity's widespread application in practice.

The lack of conclusiveness in the literature was presumed to indicate a more complex relation between product publicity and the cognitive, attitudinal and conative outcomes. The current literature was criticized for being based on unrealistic generalizations about the context and content of product publicity as well as the objects of the publicity message.

Consequently, the second part of this paper has attempted to provide an understanding the impact of product publicity on attitude formation for fashion products.

The investigation of product publicity in fashion magazines was grounded in a thorough investigation of the fashion product, and the attitude formation process in relation to such products.

Fashion products were found to primarily satisfy social, emotional and symbolic needs for the consumers, and the readers of fashion magazines in particular, and it was concluded that consumers of fashion products and readers of fashion magazines in particular have a high felt involvement with the product category.

Actual occurrences of product publicity in American fashion magazines were then illustrated as the basis for considering how contextual cues impact the readers.

Based on the consideration that the source of a message is a cue to the product-user image of value-expressive product, and that the consumer will test congruity between this image and their self-image it was argued that the source of a message would have considerable impact despite of the high involvement of the consumer. In was thus concluded, that source cues would have an important influence on the formation of attitudes for fashion products.

For the first time this paper has then linked product publicity to McCracken's (1986, 1989) model of meaning transfer, and found it to be very suitable for explaining how consumers derive meaning from product publicity.
As the source of a product publicity message the magazine not only transfers credibility to the product, but lends part of its meaning or product-user image to the product. This product-user image is then compared to the consumer's self-image, a comparison which forms the basis of the attitude formation. The magazines informs consumers about how to communicate through clothing, by making clothing objects meaningful symbols, and about how to communicate to associate or dissociate with the product-user image of the fashion magazine. This in turns satisfies the consumers need for union or isolation from the product-user image of the magazine.

Finally, it was illustrated that the internal context of a magazine affects the meaning of the product as well. This connects the study of product publicity to the study of semiotics, visual and textual discourse.

In conclusion, product publicity is an extensive new and undeveloped area of marketing research, and this paper was only able to consider a few of its aspects.
Paradoxical perhaps, due of the theoretical nature of this paper, the most important suggestions for future research is to base it more on actual occurrences of product publicity, and to include the characteristics of the product, media, and editorial content in the analysis, thus bridging the gap between practice and theory

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APPENDIX 1: MAGAZINE FACT SHEETS

W Magazine	**Condé Nast Publications**
Website	www.wmagazine.com
Circulation	453,735
Female / Male	27% / 73%
Median Age	48 years
Median HHI	$159,824
Reader per copy	n/a

Source: www.condenastmediakit.com/wmag/circulation.cfm accessed May 17th 2010

Vogue	**Condé Nast Publications**
Website	www.style.com
Circulation	1,240,800
Female / Male	88% / 12%
Median Age	34,5 years
Median HHI	$68,667
Reader per copy	n/a

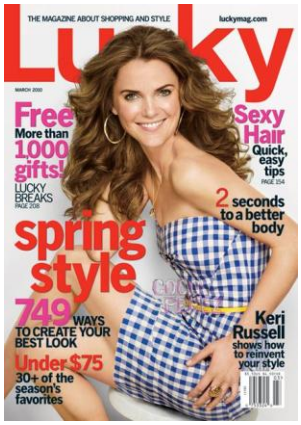
Source: www.condenastmediakit.com/wmag/circulation.cfm accessed May 17th 2010

Vanity Fair	**Condé Nast Publications**
Website	www.vanityfair.com
Circulation	1,251,101
Female / Male	23% / 77%
Median Age	40,3
Median HHI	$74,765
Reader per copy	6,26

Source: www.condenastmediakit.com/vf/circulation.cfm accessed May 17th 2010

Glamour	**Condé Nast Publications**
Website	www.glamour.com
Circulation	2,448,119
Female / Male	Approx. 100 % female
Median Age	35
Median HHI	n/a
Reader per copy	Approx. 5,43

Source: www.condenastmediakit.com/gla/circulation.cfm accessed May 17th 2010



Lucky	**Condé Nast Publications**
Website	www.lucky.com
Circulation	1,128,673
Female / Male	n/a
Media Age	33
Median HHI	$ 82,732
Readers per copy	n/a

Source: www.condenastmediakit.com/luc/circulation.cfm accessed May 17th 2010

Cosmopolitan	**Hearst Communication**
Website	www.cosmopolitan.com
Circulation	2,907,436
Female / Male	84% / 16%
Median Age	30,3
Median HHI	$57,298
Readers per copy	5,87

Source: www.cosmomediakit.com/r5/home.asp accessed May 17th 2010

Harper's Bazaar	**Hearst Communication**
Website	www.harpersbazaar.com
Circulation	732,642
Female / Male	87,7% / 12,3%
Median Age	36 years
Median HHI	$ 82,151
Readers per copy	4,10

Source: www.harpersbazaarmediakit.com/r5/home.asp accessed May 17th

Marie Claire	**Hearst Communication**
Website	www.marieclaire.com
Circulation	992,595
Female / Male	n/a
Median Age	34.1
Median HHI	$72,028
Readers per copy	n/a

Source: www.marieclairemk.com/r5/home.asp accessed May 17th

Elle	**Hachette Filipacchi Media**
Website	www.elle.com
Circulation	5,942,000
Female / Male	92% / 8%
Median Age	32,9
Median HHI	$77,039
Readers per copy	5,52

Source: http://hfmus.com/hfmus/media_kits/fashion_beauty_design/elle/about_us Accessed May 17th

APPENDIX 1: MAGAZINE FACT SHEETS

InStyle	**Time Inc.**
Website	www.instyle.com
Circulation	10,427,000
Female / Male	90% / 10%
Media Age	35,5
Median HHI	$84,319
Readers per copy	n/a

Source: www.instyle.com/instyle/static/advertising/mediakit/instyle/mri.html accessed May 17th

V Magazine	**V Magazines**
Website	www.vmagazine.com
Circulation	n/a
Female / Male	70% / 30%
Median Age	28
Median HHI	$150,000
Readers per copy	4,2

Source: http://vmagazine.com/mediakit/01_covers.htm