

The Celebrity Factory: New Modes of Fashion Entrepreneurship

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to analyze the contribution of celebrity culture to the re-shaping of the fashion industry, distancing from an oppositional view while embracing a systemic one, where celebrity is considered a fundamental engine of the contemporary cultural production of fashion and a global consumerist culture. The scope of our paper tries to overcome the endorsement point of view to address the relationship between celebrity and fashion as a two-way relationship which is re-wiring the fashion industry. The paper will explore the multiple manifestations of the so-called celebrity brand labels, from Kim Kardashian to Victoria Beckham.

Keywords: Fashion entrepreneurship; Media celebrity; Business celebrity; Total entertainment; Brand and retail

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Introduction

Pamela Church Gibson, in *Fashion and Celebrity Culture*, states that “the relationship between fashion and celebrity culture needs to be carefully examined, and...this task is long overdue, since their new interdependency has arguably altered the workings of contemporary fashion in quite significant ways.”¹ The aim of this paper is to analyse the contribution of celebrity culture to the re-shaping of the fashion industry, distancing itself from an oppositional view while embracing a systemic one, where celebrity is considered a fundamental engine of the contemporary cultural production of fashion and a global consumerist culture. Studies that have addressed the relationship between celebrity and fashion are based on the idea of “influence,” as in “Prada and the Art of Patronage”² or “The Habitus of Elizabeth Hurley,”³ while not so much has been said about the fundamental link between celebrity and everyday fashion, in the sense of “clothing” and “dress.” The reason is, as Pamela Church Gibson underlines, that fashion research has tended to focus on the two extreme poles of the fashion system, developing them concurrently: high fashion, as the domain of the artistic, and street style, as a subcultural field with countercultural connotations. They are both linked to the belief in a unified personality expressing itself through different styles and an ability to put together a look. As a result, everyday fashion, cheap, ubiquitous, with no aura, calls into question any idea of “agency” and creativity, as it is argued in the essay “People Dress So Badly Nowadays,” part of the anthology *Fashion and Modernity*.⁴ As Pamela Church Gibson makes clear in the introductory pages of *Fashion and Celebrity Culture*, only a few scholars have been interested in the new interdependence between celebrity and fashion that started in the 1990s, so much so that the first volume of the prestigious *Celebrity Studies Journal* does not even mention what Valerie Steel has called the “F-word,”⁵ ignoring that for younger generations fashion and celebrity are synonymous, and that fashion is a lived experience. The transformation of the fashion system as described by Roland Barthes in 1967⁶ is by now evident, and yet fashion scholars have neglected the phenomenon, even if celebrities are involved as never before in economic and creative enterprises that squarely fall into the fashion industry sphere, blurring the boundaries between the celebrity system and the fashion system. The pervasiveness of celebrity culture has transformed the patterns of consumption and production,⁷ where this pervasiveness itself can be explained with the strong relationship that these two spheres of cultural production have forged, through marketing, promotion and production of fashionable goods. Traditionally, the notion of “endorser” has been used to refer to the relationship between celebrity and fashion. The celebrity endorser is defined as “any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement.”⁸ The preconceived image consumers have for any celebrity endorser will transfer to the endorsed brand.⁹ Friedman and Friedman¹⁰ found empirical evidence that using a celebrity endorser would add great believability to product promotion. However, the scope of our paper tries to overcome the endorsement point of view to address the relationship between celebrity and fashion as a two-way relationship that is rewiring the fashion industry. Celebrities lead the trends and have their firm place in the front row. They are not only used at the retail end of the market by luxury brands, influencing consumer behaviour, but they have also become a very important strategic asset for the fast

¹ Gibson, P. C., *Fashion and Celebrity Culture*, Berg, London and New York 2012, p. 1.

² Ryan, N., “Prada and the Art of Patronage,” *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture*, 11/1 (March), p. 7-23.

³ Barron, L., “The Habitus of Elizabeth Hurley: Celebrity, Fashion and Identity Branding,” *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture*, 11/4 (December), p. 443-61.

⁴ Hill, A., “People Dress So Badly Nowadays: Fashion and Late Modernity,” Breward, C., Evans, C., (eds.) *Fashion and Modernity*, Berg, Oxford 2005.

⁵ Steel, V., ‘The F Word,’ *Lingua Franca: The Review of Academic Life* (April).

⁶ Barthes, R., *The Fashion System*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1990.

⁷ Gibson, P. C., *op. cit.*, p. 10.

⁸ McCracken, G., “Who is the Celebrity Endorser? Cultural Foundations of the Endorsement Process,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Dec., 1989), p. 310-321.

⁹ Atkin, C., Block, M., “Effectiveness of celebrity endorsers,” *Journal of Advertising Research*, 23(1), 1983, p. 57-61.

¹⁰ Friedman, H.H., & Friedman, L., “Endorser effectiveness by product type,” *Journal of Advertising Research*, 19, 1979, p. 63-71.

and luxury fashion industries. A number of studies about the economic value of strategic marketing decisions have examined “the effect of strategic marketing decisions such as product innovation, research and development expenditures, advertisement expenditures, product quality, and consumer satisfaction on firm profitability.”¹¹ Therefore a growing number of firms are putting more emphasis on celebrity endorsement to enhance the value of advertising and build brand equity. The economic returns from the investment in this form of advertising will influence many things from initial design to marketing tool selection.¹² The example most quoted in fashion studies literature about the celebrity adventures in fashion land, is that of the celestoid¹³ Elizabeth Hurley, who has gradually built her fashion swimwear brand Elizabeth Hurley Beach on the basis of her “habitus” of which she is both “medium and transmitter.”¹⁴ The advent of celebrity is looked at with suspicion by specialised press. They consider celebrity a menace to the very existence of fashion. What they do not mention is that when they say “fashion” they mean “high fashion,” the institutions that have raised them and that now are being challenged.¹⁵ Even if the covers of the most popular fashion magazines are filled with celebrities, media maintain the categorical distinction between celebrity fashion and fashion as “high fashion,” as the relative absence of celebrities from the western runways demonstrates, with the exception of the couple Owen Wilson-Ben Stiller for Valentino FW 2015. With the increasingly fierce market competition in the fashion industry, the celebrity effect as a marketing tool has become increasingly popular for fashion brands. According to some studies in the United States done in 1995, almost 20% of the television advertisements use a famous person as an endorser.¹⁶ By 2000, this number increased to 25%.¹⁷ The celebrity effect will influence consumers mainly via media and the consumers’ buying behaviour directly. On the other hand, the effect on firms will not only be on their strategic marketing decisions, direct profits and the potential returns, but a transformation of their business models toward a greater flexibility, with the integration of celebrities as creative agents, as is the case with the Puma-Rihanna deal, the celebrity-designer (Victoria Beckham, The Row, Kanye West) or the designer-celebrity (Tom Ford, Michael Kors, Ralph Lauren).

Therefore, the essential field that analyses media mutations and forms of contemporary entertainment will help in shedding light on the business models proposed by celebrities in relation to their brand narratives and personal narratives.

Considering the classic definition of Henry Jenkins’s transmedia storytelling as the “unfolding of a narrative across multiple media platform, with each new text making distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole”¹⁸ and the subsequent theory of spreadable media,¹⁹ here we will consider the case studies (from Kim Kardashian to Chiara Ferragni) as forms of deep contemporary entertainment (the notion of reference here is that of Frank Rose’s deep media²⁰). These business models simultaneously involve the product (fashion) and content (the tale of the brand and the character’s tale) and are specifically tailored by capitalising on the forces of the different media to establish a long-term and differentiated relationship with different types of

¹¹ Capon, N., Farley, J. U., and Hoenig, S., “Determinants of Financial Performance: A Meta-Analysis,” *Management Science*, Vol. 36, No. 10, focussed Issue on the State of the Art in Theory and Method in Strategy Research (Oct., 1990), p. 1143-1159.

¹² Agrawal, J., and Kamakura W. A., “The Economic Worth of Celebrity Endorsers: An Event Study Analysis,” *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 59, No. 3 (Jul., 1995), p. 56-62.

¹³ The reference is to the well-known distinction of Chris Rojek in *Celebrity*, Reaktion Book, London, 2001.

¹⁴ Barron, L., *op. cit.*, p. 444.

¹⁵ “Are Celebrity Labels Good For Fashion?,” <https://www.businessoffashion.com/community/voices/discussions/are-celebrity-labels-good-for-fashion>, accessed 20 November 2017.

¹⁶ Agrawal, J., and Kamakura W. A., *op. cit.*

¹⁷ Shimp, T., *Advertising, Promotion & Supplemental Aspects of Integrated Marketing Communications*, Harcourt College Publishers, San Diego 2000.

¹⁸ Jenkins, H. *Convergence Culture. Where Old Media and new Media Collide*. New York University Press, New York, 2008, p. 95-96.

¹⁹ Jenkins, H., S. Ford, and J. Green. *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*. Postmillennial Pop. NYU Press, 2013.

²⁰ Rose, F. *The Art of Immersion: How the Digital Generation Is Remaking Hollywood, Madison Avenue, and the Way We Tell Stories*. W. W. Norton, 2011.

audience and consumers. Our key concept when looking at these phenomena is to consider them through the “total entertainment” lens as theorised by Paul Grainge,²¹ a business model based on the horizontal and diagonal integration of several markets under the brand’s shield (immersive brand world). Although the work of Grainge had as its object the Hollywood industry, it is undoubtedly possible to apply his theory to all cases of “brand-based entertainment”²² like those we are focusing on like celebrities as a media & fashion company. The emphasis on the brand creates an intensification of content and products that provide an immersive and diversified consumption experience. Textual and commercial strategy is therefore operative, just like in the media industries, on two levels. At the level of industrial strategies, product diversification serves to maintain the brand’s visibility (think of the Kardashians, their production expansion, the logic of media spreadability, and the rapid obsolescence of products) or to bring the bond to everyday fashion and its strong connection to the mid-low brand market (the case of Jessica Simpson). At the content level,²³ a sort of multimedia narrative universe is created (think of Sarah Jessica Parker’s shoe line directly related to her iconic character, the Instagram Stories by Chiara Ferragni or the appearance by Marcelo Burlon in *Pechino Express*).

All the cases, analysed in their general characteristics without going into the specificity of the single creation, will be analysed in the framework of what we can define as the study of media fashion,²⁴ braided media industries²⁵ and media franchises²⁶ and their different points of view.

Fame monster and accidental fashion mogul: in total entertainment we need fashion

In attempting to grasp the wide variety of celebrity brand labels, we should take a look at the more or less successful experiments embarked on by reality stars. Despite the advertising launches talking of fashion, creativity and style, there is no doubt about the fact that almost all the brands they have founded have to do with clothing, mass distribution and, last but not least, trickle-down mechanisms. Fashion,²⁷ which encompasses invention and research, self-expression and identity construction, is not exactly what first comes to mind when thinking of the Kardashian sisters’ bags that for years lived a lonely life on the shelves of Sears, the US department store chain.²⁸ But how else to explain these complex phenomena, sneered at on all sides yet so pervasive? By setting aside for a moment the tools for analysing the fashion industry and fashion consumption and looking more at the inner mechanisms of the above-cited “total entertainment” and studies on celebrity. In this age, the celebrities who have seen reality TV as the entry point have been able to implement a three-phase transformation: making themselves a product, positioning themselves as a brand with a precise but multifaceted identity, and, finally, adding brand extension (the multiplication of products bearing their name, from tanning spray to hair extensions) to brand ubiquity (being every-

²¹ Grainge, P. *Brand Hollywood: Selling Entertainment in a Global Media Age*. Taylor & Francis, 2007.

²² Grainge, P. *Brand Hollywood: Selling Entertainment in a Global Media Age*. Taylor & Francis, 2007, 16.

²³ To understand the multidimensionality of engagement as happens in television franchises: Elizabeth Evans, 2015. “Layering Engagement: The Temporal Dynamics of Transmedia Television Storyworlds.” *A Journal of Narrative Studies*. 7(2), III-128.

²⁴ Bartlett, D., S. Cole, and A. Rocamora. *Fashion Media: Past and Present*. EBL-Schweitzer. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013.

²⁵ Freeman, M. *Industrial Approaches to Media. A Methodological Gateway to Industry Studies*, Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016. Jonathan Gray, 2017. *Keywords in Media Studies*. New York: New York University Press .

²⁶ Johnson, D. *Media Franchising: Creative License and Collaboration in the Culture Industries*. Postmillennial Pop. NYU Press, 2013.

²⁷ For an overview of fashion: Codeluppi, V., *Che cos’è la moda*, Carocci, Rome, 2003; Codeluppi V., *Dalla corte alla strada. Natura ed evoluzione sociale della moda*, Carocci, Rome, 2007; Frisa M.L., *Le forme della moda. Cultura, industria, mercato: dal sarto al direttore creativo*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2015; Marchetti. M.C., *Manuale di comunicazione, sociologia e cultura della moda*, Meltemi Editore, Rome, 2004; Calefato, P., *Mass moda. linguaggio e immaginario del corpo rivestito*, Meltemi Editore, Rome, 2007.

²⁸ Cf. <https://www.forbes.com/2015/05/06/sears-dumps-kardashian-whats-next-for-fashion-empire/> viewed on 15 October 2017.

where simultaneously as part of a “broad narrative” across media channels).²⁹ The ultimate product of current or former reality TV stars is based on one basic concept: dilating your “celebrity capital” and occupying as much space as possible, completing the saturation of any type of media and sales channel. The mechanisms that lie behind the success of reality TV stars and by extension what we want to treat here as “total entertainment” call for talent and creativity that are less about artistic expression and more about entrepreneurship and transparency about one’s private life. And it is this area, midway between material goals and inconsistency, that modern celebrities have in common with fashion, and where the narrative plays a crucial role. The entertainment that the wider public gets from celebrities is based on personal narratives: stories of celebrities’ private lives, but also stories about how their bodies interact with cosmetic surgery, technology and fashion.

As stated by Paul Grainge “In both a cultural and economic sense, branding has become central to the modern *gestalt* of ‘total entertainment.’ This term refers to industrial structures of corporate ownership as well as to particular textual and consumption practices that have developed at a juncture where entertainment content is inclined, and designed, to travel in mobile ways across media platforms and ancillary/territorial markets.”

As Mark Andrejevic writes in his book *Reality TV. The Work of Being Watched*: “The phenomenal success of reality as a form of entertainment has led to the familiar cycle whereby news outlets come to rely on the next blow-out story.”³⁰ What he calls the migration of reality towards entertainment also feeds on its opposite. Living with the TV cameras always on, experiencing family dramas as though in a soap opera, in a constant dialectic between narrative stasis and the sensationalism of plot twists, is part of this framework. Furthermore, in this scenario, reality TV manages to keep up with the most flexible forms of production and acts as an alternative model free from the need for advertising and exploiting different income streams (forms of product placement and branded entertainment above all).³¹ By adding advertising to the content, a reality show erodes the past industrial model even more, striving not to dominate the schedule with hours and hours of reruns broadcast at all imaginable time slots, but to emerge from the screen and dominate all possible sectors.

As the channels and platforms expand, sponsorships find new ways of entering those programmes that relate lives and promote lifestyles through the consumption of certain products.³² Even when consumption is only suggested and not openly advertised, it is still aiming to drive purchases. As the television market has expanded and changed in recent years, the reality format – given its propensity for product placement – has been used to host personalities poised to become celebrities.

Another factor can be added to this. Today, total entertainment highlights various ways of managing one’s individuality and entrepreneurship. The enterprise TV regime, discussed by scholars James Hay and Laurie Ouellette,³³ is a further important point when it comes to understanding the facets of the new phenomenon of celebrity brand labels within the framework of self-entrepreneurship, total entertainment and “self help.” In the “enterprise TV” regime, the basic principles of business management are narrative elements related with care and tension: from managing one’s budget to studying pros/cons, from choosing a business strategy to financial returns.

In all scripted reality shows starring ordinary people, from wedding planning to running a restaurant, from *The Apprentice* to *Project Runway* to *Cake Boss*, the day-to-day running of a business becomes the central concept around which storylines are built. This type of scenario, in which business management blends

²⁹ From Paris Hilton’s hair extensions to Kardashian-branded instant tanners.

³⁰ Mark Andrejevic in his book *Reality TV. The Work of Being Watched*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, London, 2004, 73.

³¹ As Andrejevic underlines, “Rather than relying on expensive formats sold to networks at a loss that can be recouped in syndication, reality TV heralds an era of quick-hit formats that make money during their first run but have little to no value as reruns.” Andrejevic, *op.cit.*, 2004, 90.

³² For more information on the new television and its dynamics, see Amanda Lotz, *The Television Will Be Revolutionized*, NYU Press, New York, 2014.

³³ Laurie Ouellette “Enterprising Selves. Reality Television and Human Capital” in Derek Johnson, Derek Kompare, Avi Santo (eds.), *Making Media Work: Cultures of Management in the Entertainment Industries*, NYU Press, New York, 2014.

with private life, attracts even more attention if the business is run by celebrities. In this case, the meaning of “celebrity business” comes close to the concept of “business celebrity” (e.g. Richard Branson, Bill Gates or Elon Musk), in which it is sustained that the meaning of business celebrity is interconnected with a series of cultural and media mediators that form and support it and that “the connections between business and celebrity point towards something central to both institutions, and not simply because celebrity is a business the point of which is to make lots of money.”³⁴ From a broader, cultural perspective, business celebrity functions as a forum (however compromised by commercial or promotional hype) for concerns and debates about what it means to be an individual in a complex, modern society, and what it means for individuals to work in complex, commercial organizations.”³⁵

Instead of media celebrities, then, we must look at business celebrities, since the involvement of these stars in any sector is just one of the possible outcomes of managing their image/brand.

The Kardashians’ involvement in fashion is just one division, one sector, of their multifaceted brand stretching, what we could call a very sophisticated and better-marketed form of merchandising (although often accused of copying other brands).³⁶ It is not by chance that their empire stretches over a number of product categories, from apps (Glu mobile) to make-up (Kylie’s Kylie Cosmetics and Kim’s KKW Beauty contouring line), to store chains (Dash). With a base represented in the show itself. Without going into the specifics whether KKWTK is or not a reality show, it should be noted that since its premiere in 2007, *Keeping Up With the Kardashians* has broadcast 168 episodes and in every season the family businesses have formed some of the biggest storylines. In the first season, the family store, Dash, was one of the main sets in the series. The stars discussed their lives in the store in a consumption scenario open to all. Indeed, the consumption scenario is the most explored storyline in the show. Thinking up new products and launching them on the market is the lifeblood of the script, in a sort of business reality drama. With all the excitement that entails. At the launch of Kylie Cosmetics, for example, there was a clock counting down the minutes and a dramatic cut to commercial the moment the website seemed to crash.³⁷ Celebrity is found solely at the point in which success becomes a raw material, a good produced and consumed in the media and in a way that becomes a desire to consume.³⁸

The celebrities themselves become merchandise subject to the industrial and mediated process of “celebrification.” And this type of heterogeneous industrial production is more a success than a failure. Since their products all have to do with fads, quickly replaced by others, with very short expected lifespans and an empire based on licensing and turnover, what might look like uncertainty is actually a precise strategy.

In the context of today’s fashion, induced obsolescence (i.e. new clothes and full-blown trends every week) paradoxically better serves the interests of the high-end industry (luxury RTW) which, thanks to this phenomenon, can renew itself, make mistakes and take chances. In the cyclic nature of fashion, the number of consumers adopting a particular garment/object/symbol often grows at lightning speed before peaking and then declining. If a new product passes the crucial “test” of the early adopters, some pioneers will adopt it, immediately followed by a forward-thinking majority. Beyond this point, the product attracts only latecomers, persuaded by the general consensus, and the curve inexorably grinds to a halt. The bell chart represents the trend of innovation (and trends) in which social networks play a key role in calculating the critical threshold of innovation. This is where the Kardashians’ strength lies: in knowing the ups and downs of that bell chart and thinking of products that have a precise lifespan or that are easy to shut down.³⁹ In light of these assessments, Teri Agins’s claim that “most of the celebrity brands sadden me, they are a cheap easy way to get short-term consumer buy in with little long-term strategy or poten-

³⁴ Guthey, E., Clark, T., Jackson, B., *Demystifying Business Celebrity*, Routledge, London, 2009, p. 7

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Cf. <https://fashionista.com/2011/11/adventures-in-kopyright> viewed on 15 October 2017.

³⁷ Cf. <https://theoutline.com/post/746/the-kardashian-empire-is-bigger-and-weirder-than-you-think> viewed on 15 October 2017.

³⁸ Christopher Rojek, (2001: 12, 187ff).

³⁹ More Kardashian brands and stores have closed than are still running.

tial,” is immaterial.⁴⁰ In this business model, a short-term vision is necessary. From this perspective, what several commentators claimed at a BoF round table, that “What’s more, the rise of celebrity labels risks drowning out the creativity and talent of professional designers” is doubtless proved wrong.⁴¹ Therefore, the celebrity capital of reality stars is truly polymorphous and complex. Success and affirmation go hand in hand with communication of one’s entrepreneurship, branding and branded self-culture, public life against private life, capacity for constant renewal and exclusivity against egalitarianism. The latter is perhaps key to understanding the diametrically opposing empire built by Jessica Simpson. *People* magazine’s article “Accidental Fashion Mogul” marked the brand’s reaching its first billion dollars in sales in 2011.⁴² Compared to the Kardashians’ crowded domain of scheduled obsolescence, Simpson’s empire has a more conventional business model. In her book *Hijacking the Runway*, Teri Agins dedicates a long chapter to her and concludes by saying “it could be said that Jessica Simpson’s biggest fashion achievement is having become invisible.”⁴³ Finally, she can let the shoes – and the rest of the merch – do the talking.⁴⁴ In another interview, Jessica Simpson deftly condenses the difference between celebrity brand labels and an entrepreneur who also operates in clothing. “What you really need is your basics for every type of person. When it comes to other celebrity brands, I think a lot of people do a great job, but it can’t be all about them. Everybody doesn’t want to just look like the celebrity, because they can’t. They just want one element of that style.”⁴⁵ One element of that style. Here lies the subtle difference between fashion and retail. As Agins asks, “Are celebrity lines breaking new ground, which is the definition of fashion to me? No. Are they good for business, which is the definition of good retail to me? Maybe. It depends on the line.”⁴⁶ Without a doubt, Jessica Simpson’s line is in the second category and business is certainly looking up. Jessica Simpson’s label is sold at major department stores such as Macy’s, Lord & Taylor and Dillard’s and includes over 30 different product categories, from shoes to clothing, accessories and even homeware, available at chains like Bed Bath & Beyond. She has created the Dessert Treats & Dessert Beauty cosmetics line and an accessories line for Macy’s. Initially partnered with businessman Vince Camuto, and now owned by Sequential, Simpson’s line is set to expand into a \$3 billion company, according to a report by *Women’s Wear Daily*. While Jessica Simpson has made herself invisible so as not to get in the way of business, Sarah Jessica Parker has chosen a different path. Some celebrities become icons thanks to the characters they play, creating a kind of short-circuit between the actor and the fictional character. The interaction between Carrie Bradshaw’s style as seen in the hit TV series *Sex and the City* and that of the actor playing her enabled the launch of a collection of, obviously, shoes. In line with her character, the collection takes a rather elitist stance, immersing the product in the appeal created by the show. As the website states, “Each shoe in the collection is handcrafted in Italy by a third generation Tuscan shoemaker,” aiming for a highly luxurious positioning that is also classic and outside of the trends. This rather anti-commercial attitude relies heavily on the durability of the shoe and its ability to become a key piece of the wardrobe (“a luxury shoe offered at a fair price point. The collection is comprised of classic, timeless silhouettes meant to fit into a woman’s life for many years to come”). Unlike what was affirmed at the start of this essay, here the celebrity is not looking for high product obsolescence or to saturate the market with interchangeable and unmemorable goods, but instead is trying to build a brand with precise values (quality first and foremost) and an offering based not on constant modification but solid distribution agreements.⁴⁷

⁴⁰ <https://www.businessoffashion.com/community/voices/discussions/are-celebrity-labels-good-for-fashion>

⁴¹ <https://www.businessoffashion.com/community/voices/discussions/are-celebrity-labels-good-for-fashion>

⁴² Cf. <http://people.com/style/jessica-simpson-accidental-fashion-mogul/> and cf. <https://www.bloomberg.com/2015-04-06/how-simpson-built-a-billion-dollar-fashion-empire> viewed on 15 October 2017.

⁴³ From her debut as a US pop singer to platinum discs with Columbia Records. From *Hazzard* (2005) and *Blonde Ambition* (2007) to the MTV reality show *Newlyweds*. From here, and not without a few initial positioning issues, she launched her adventure in the world of beauty and fashion.

⁴⁴ Agins, T., *Hijacking the Runway: How Celebrities Are Stealing the Spotlight from Fashion Designers*, Penguin Books, 2014, p. 53-66. Kate Hudson’s line also benefits from a degree of invisibility. For Fabletics, she behaves more like a testimonial than an owner.

⁴⁵ Cf. <http://nymag.com/fashion/11/spring/71664/index1.html> viewed on 15 October 2017.

⁴⁶ Cf. <https://www.businessoffashion.com/are-celebrity-labels-good-for-fashion> viewed on 15 October 2017.

⁴⁷ The SJP shoe line launched in 2014. In 2016 it launched a collection with Amazon, but was available solely in the American

The celebrity as designer of his/her own fashion brand

According to Andy Warhol, in the society of the spectacle everyone will be famous and therefore need beautiful clothes for at least 15 minutes. According to Chris Rojek, “Taste is, of course, pivotal in celebrity culture. Indeed, the growth of celebrity culture is closely bound up with the aestheticization of everyday life.”⁴⁸ If the body becomes a commodity, in the sense of an object of consumption, no wonder that fashion has taken a pivotal role in contemporary society. Thanks to fashion, celebrities augment their visibility through media, while luxury brands, thanks to celebrities, gain the glamour they need and a connection with the times. Until a few years ago celebrities were “endorsers” of consumer brands, and as the introduction underlines there is extensive literature on the phenomenon.⁴⁹ Celebrity endorsement, while a legitimate consideration for marketers, focuses on celebrity in a limited sense: the celebrity “has” celebrity status and bestows this on a brand/product in order to enhance the product’s position in the marketplace. However, to understand the construction of the celebrity and the celebrity brand: “We must analyse its social and symbolic function – starting with the notion of celebrity as a form of collective action – if we are to tap into its development as an instrument for the mobilisation of economic production and power.”⁵⁰ Celebrities are increasingly entering the fashion competition as traditional designers or celebrity brands, with cultural consequences that still have not been addressed. Celebrity, spectacle, and media interests live in entangled relation, feeding off and energising one another symbiotically. Celebrity culture makes news. It is a ritualised distributive space⁵¹ of inventive social formation and transformation. The spectacle carries celebrity content, manufactured from “elements of the code and technical manipulation of the medium.”⁵² With the media explosion of the 1990s and more recent developments associated with social media, it appears that media production has become ever more image-driven, obsessed with fame. As Milligan⁵³ and Shepherd⁵⁴ (2005) argue, the mass mediatisation of individual personality situates celebrities and public figures as human brands. Celebrity fashion brands sell the *habitus* of the celebrity, they are the dream. Of course brands, in their struggle to stay relevant try to harness their power, engaging in celebritisation strategies.

On 16 December 2014 Puma released the following statement: “Today, PUMA and Global Cultural icon Rihanna, announced a new multi-year partnership, kicking off in January 2015. Rihanna will become PUMA’s global ambassador for Women’s Training and serve as the PUMA Women’s Creative Director, bringing her styling sensibilities and innovation to PUMA’s collections. Embodying everything that PUMA stands for, Rihanna’s unstoppable spirit, creative energy and prowess both on and off the stage, make her the perfect representation of the PUMA brand.”⁵⁵ It was the first time that a pop star was appointed Creative Director by virtue of her style and attitude rather than her designing skills or fashion’s past. She is not a spokesperson in the traditional sense, she is Puma made flesh, while representing the final female consumer as creative producer. In the fall of 2015, Rihanna released her first trainer with Puma – the Creeper – and the sneaker sold out online within three hours of its pre-sale launch. According to *Fortune*, in 2016 the German-based company issued strong third-quarter results, with sales rising an impressive 11% to \$1.08 billion, with balanced growth coming from footwear and apparel,⁵⁶ while Amirah

market. Early success led to the offering being widened to Europe, proposing the “Fawn” court shoe in three exclusive colours. The shoes, made in Italy, will be available online in Amazon’s fashion section from October 2017.

⁴⁸ Rojek, C., *op. cit.*, p. 102.

⁴⁹ Erdogan, Z., Celebrity Endorsement: A Literature Review, *Journal of Marketing Management*,** Vol. 15, Issue 4, 1999.

⁵⁰ Kerrigan, F., Brownlie, D., Hewer P. & Daza-LeTouze C., “‘Spinning’ Warhol: Celebrity brand theoretics and the logic of the celebrity brand,” *Journal of Marketing Management*, 27:13-14, 2011, p. 1504-1524, p. 1511.

⁵¹ Couldry, N., *Media Rituals: A Critical Approach*, Psychology Press, Routledge, London 2003.

⁵² Baudrillard, J., *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, SAGE, London 1998, p. 125.

⁵³ Milligan, A., *Brand it Like Beckham: The Story of How Brand Beckham Was Built*, Cyan Books, London 2004.

⁵⁴ Shepherd, Ifan D. H., (2005), “From cattle and coke to Charlie: meeting the challenge of self marketing and personal branding,” *Journal of Marketing Management*, 21 (5-6), 2005, p. 589-606.

⁵⁵ <http://about.puma.com/en/newsroom/corporate-news/2014/december/RIHANNA-TO-PARTNER-WITH-PUMA>

⁵⁶ <http://fortune.com/2016/11/10/rihanna-kylie-jenner-puma/>

Mercer from the pages of *Vanity Fair* declared Rihanna's Puma Creeper the year's must-have shoe.⁵⁷ In *Stars* Richard Dyer stated that the star is both ordinary and extraordinary,⁵⁸ and the Fenty x Puma collections perfectly embody this contradiction. As Rihanna described it, "The Addams family goes to the gym." Rihanna now holds such immense fashion sway that when fans see her outfits they don't merely copy the style, they bookmark online boutiques selling the exact Thrasher T-shirt she wore, and then unabashedly re-create the look on their own Instagram accounts. On 2 June 2014, Rihanna received the Fashion Icon Award at the 2014 Council of Fashion Designers of America Fashion Awards. She is also the first woman to have won *Footwear News's* coveted Shoe of the Year Award. Thanks to co-branding and the exploitation of her star power, in the process she was able to become fashion. Not every celebrity wants to become fashion, some of them license their images in order to sell products associated with them.

While Rihanna is fashion, Victoria Beckham is the type of celebrity interested in becoming part of the high fashion industry. In order to achieve that, as we shall see, she had to erase her 1990s pop celebrity past and re-brand as a detached, impersonal, serious, elusive, uber-chic, something reflected in her designs. She had to change her visible taste. As *Glamour* put it, Victoria Beckham "has been one of the greatest style stories of the century."⁵⁹ Her fashion journey went from Spice Girls pop singer – she was the "posh" one – to refined minimalist fashion guru. The web is fascinated with metamorphosis stories and there are many articles tracking Victoria Beckham's style evolution from the 1990s extravaganza to the skinniness of the 2000s. According an interview given to *The Business of Fashion*, "even more important than the physical transformation that took place for all to see, was the personal transformation that she was undergoing in terms of her own taste level and aesthetic. Today, if Beckham can rattle off designer names, construction techniques and fabric specifications in detail, it is because of the effort she has made to learn about clothes, brands and the business." We are assured that this is not the umpteenth celebrity brand, this a creative enterprise, which is not commercially driven. Beckham's first foray into fashion was through a series of licensing arrangements with Linda Farrow for eyewear, rock & republic for denim, Coty for fragrances, and Samantha Thavasa, a Japanese label known for its accessory collaborations with celebrities including Paris Hilton. But these deals were a form of celebrity endorsement, while Beckham wanted to be a part of the creative process, the business decisions. Now she is featured in the BoF 500 list, the prestigious list cooked up every year by *The Business of Fashion* of the most influential people in the world of fashion. The BoF paragraph reports: "Since launching her womenswear line in 2008 with a range of easy dresses and slim separates, the former pop-star has continued to impress critics with her expanding aesthetic, growing her brand into a global fashion label that now includes handbags, sunglasses and shoes."⁶⁰ Magazine articles referring to her brand never forget to mention her past as a pop star, drawing a clear distinction between the "celebrity brand" and the legitimate "fashion brand." If we look at her style journey – on the Internet there are many YouTube videos dedicated to the matter – the first thing one notices is that somewhere around 2008 she stopped smiling. Looking through her images since the Spice Girls split until the launching of her fashion brand in 2008 we learn how much effort she put into re-branding herself as a legitimate fashion icon. She underwent a period of high style instability in which it is clear she was struggling to find a new image. Victoria began the transformation from pop star to fashion icon by losing the hair extensions and forging a blossoming relationship with Katie Holmes. The A-list pals posed at spring/summer 2007's Chanel fashion show wearing Chanel, the epitome of legitimate fashion. In the same year she released her personal style guide *That Extra Half An Inch* and was photographed looking über-chic at the opening of a new Armani store in Paris. In 2008 she was featured for the first time on the cover of *British Vogue*. The media started to tell the story of how she managed to save herself from pop disgrace by becoming a serious and committed business woman. On 22 August 2016 *T Magazine* featured an interview with the "working girl" narrative at its core.⁶¹ On 9 April 2017 she was awarded an Order of the British Empire for her services to the fashion industry. In that occasion she declared: "If you dream big and work hard you

⁵⁷ <https://www.vanityfair.com/style/2016/05/rihanna-puma-creeper-shoe>

⁵⁸ Dyer, R., *Stars*, BFI, London 1979.

⁵⁹ <http://www.glamourmagazine.co.uk/gallery/victoria-beckhams-style-evolution>

⁶⁰ <https://www.businessoffashion.com/community/people/victoria-beckham>

⁶¹ <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/22/t-magazine/victoria-beckham-working-girl.html>

can accomplish great things. I'm so happy to share this very special occasion with my parents and husband; without their love and support, none of this would be possible." And the support has been huge.

It was 2003 when it was announced that Pop Idol creator Simon Fuller had been charged with turning David and Victoria Beckham into a global brand after his company 19 Entertainment signed a management deal with the celebrity couple. Mr. Fuller said to *The Guardian* that the new deal was "just the sort of multimedia challenge I love. Our plans revolve around a mixture of fashion, lifestyle, music and television properties."⁶² The first product of the new arrangement was expected to be a new Beckham fashion label aimed in the Far East. In 2016 the 55-year-old girl group's former manager was named entrepreneur of the year at the Business Innovation Awards in Los Angeles. Speaking on stage, Fuller revealed: "When the Spice Girls broke up, she had a few songs as a solo artist but she wasn't happy and she said to me, 'Simon, I just don't want to do music anymore. What do you think I should do?' I've known Victoria since she was 18 and her passion in life was always clothes. She was called Posh Spice because she always wore the best dresses." He also suggested that Victoria will eventually become known as "one of the world's greatest designers," adding, "She's now a legitimate fashion designer. Her company is worth literally hundreds of millions of dollars and there's no stopping her. She will be – without any doubt – one of the world's greatest designers in the next few years."⁶³ But the critical success enjoyed by the brand does not mean the business is going well. At the beginning of 2017 *The Sun* reported that "Victoria Beckham's fashion empire loses £4.6m...and even has debts of £6.7m to hubby David's firm," but the multimedia nature of the business allows for what a spokeswoman for Beckham Brand Holdings said: "These businesses may be funded in different ways at any point in time."

But the world of fashion and celebrity does not end here. The multiple ways of operating produce a variety of experiments in which it is not easy to define a hierarchy or understand which came first, the celebrity or the influencer. The narrative characteristics of storytelling on social networks, which are central to the Instagram-centric celebrity system, operate within the fashion world by influencing its features. Take the case of Alexa Chung or Chiara Ferragni. Their personal influence is a symptom of the democratisation of fashion and the democratisation of celebrity, in which a disintermediation occurs between influencer (and later designer) and consumer. Through her activities as an It-girl, socialite, TV presenter and host of journalistic web series, Alexa Chung is what magazine headlines and Pinterest boards call a style icon.⁶⁴ Chiara Ferragni, who started out as a fashion blogger, is now the epicentre of a diverse network of enterprises and collaborations. But their entrepreneurial skill has been not to convert their "taste capital" to "celebrity capital" but to exploit their following and enter the fashion world on the back of an already solid reputation.⁶⁵ For example, considering the discussions, comments and interactions of the audience with Alexa Chung, as agents of constructing meaning around her celebrity, we can affirm that her reputation and her followers positioned her as a brand before she even became the creative director of her own official brand. And to better capitalise on her personal reputation and the loyalty her followers give her, one of her business ventures is Villoid, a sort of online shop that allows users to build a virtual wardrobe on their smartphone, approved by Chung herself, to be assembled according to your own taste, creating instant outfits and buying them directly on the platform. Chiara Ferragni has also experienced this process of "celebrification."⁶⁶ Without going into too much detail about her rise and the construction of her image, we wish to highlight here her diversification and her change of tone of voice.⁶⁷ The new visual and verbal narrative models provide the opportunity to switch from brand ambassador and testimonial to entrepreneur and business

⁶² <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2003/jul/24/marketingandpr.football>

⁶³ <http://www.digitalspy.com/music/news/a792398/simon-fuller-victoria-beckham-never-felt-comfortable-spice-girls/>

⁶⁴ The Future of Fashion with Alexa Chung.

⁶⁵ Driessens, O. (2013) "The celebratization of society and culture: understanding the structural dynamics of celebrity culture." *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 16 (6). p. 641-657. DOI: 10.1177/1367877912459140

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ To read about blogging as "a subfield of the field of fashion media where young newcomers are gaining increasing popularity by challenging the rules of printed media communication" cf. Marco Pedroni, "Manufacturers of the imaginary. Second generation cultural intermediaries in the field of fashion," in *Studi culturali, Rivista quadrimestrale* 3/2014, p. 401-424, doi: 10.1405/78534

celebrity, in the field of both communication and fashion product. While her narrative has become more intimate, more uninhibited, more ironic, and is released like the instalments of a micro soap opera (especially now she has formed a power couple with rapper Fedez), her entrepreneurship has become mature, solid and unassailable. These personalities, attentive to their reputations and their “taste capital,” represent “the mobility of celebrities within media and entertainment”⁶⁸ and best exemplify that process of celebritisation explored by Driessen, when he says “Internally, the nature of celebrity changes through its democratization; externally, celebrity is produced in other social fields that are traditionally less permeated by celebrity status (diversification), and it advances the mobility within and across certain social fields of people using their celebrity status (migration).”⁶⁹

The fashion designer as celebrity

As Pamela Church Gibson underlines, the designer-as-celebrity “does not simply mean that they have a trademark appearance or a house style” (193). They appear and disappear constantly from the public eye, in magazines and on the Internet as celebrities in their own right. Designers like Valentino, Raf Simons, Yves Saint Laurent, Giorgio Armani have been the object of documentaries and feature films. Interestingly, Tom Ford has managed to pass to the other side of the camera, both media object and auteur. He is an interesting example of the fashion designer-as-celebrity and the celebrity as auteur. Interestingly, Tom Ford is strongly linked to Los Angeles, the city of entertainment and glamour.

In the last decade, fashion has undergone a process of spectacularisation that has brought it closer and closer to entertainment. In the article “Designing Minds” featured in the first issue of *The Hollywood Reporter: Fashion in Entertainment*,⁷⁰ designers Bob Mackie, Richard Tyler, Tom Ford and Anna Sui are asked to comment on the contemporary relationship between fashion and screen media. Paradoxically, much of the discussion is constructed around the figure of the classical Hollywood star and it becomes increasingly clear that each designer looks upon that era as a creative and inspirational time. For example, Tyler claims, “my designs for today’s stars are inspired by the years of Marlene Dietrich and Jean Harlow” (Christy 1998: 21). Similarly, Tom Ford says, “I let myself be influenced by films, especially the classics, for the composition of images and the female figure” (Christy 1998: 21). Both Ford and Tyler’s attitudes are also informed by a romanticised notion of classical Hollywood stardom that resonates within the contemporary cultural imagination and throughout the trade press. In a similar article in the 2001 issue of *Fashion in Entertainment*, “Intersecting Patterns,”⁷¹ designers are invited to share thoughts on the symbiotic relationship between fashion and film. Each designer interviewed references classical films and stars of the 1930s and 1940s. From this perspective, Tom Ford’s Hollywood debut makes more sense.

Given the Tom Ford fashion empire he was able to build and the celebrity status he had managed to achieve thanks to the Gucci years, when in 2009 he launched his Fade to Black production house in order to produce his first feature film, *A Single Man*, in itself a tale about celebdom, his box office worries were close to zero. In the publicity interviews he stressed how the decision to direct a movie was the fulfilment of a lifelong ambition.⁷² He therefore secured the rights to Christopher Isherwood’s 1960s novel *A Single Man*, which he adapted for the screen. He cast, directed and oversaw the whole production in order to make a fashion film, the purest expression of his creative vision, globally known for glamorised and immaculate masculinity. Of course, being enormously rich, he could afford to make a movie as an expression of his artistic vision, a vision that is pure Tom Ford. It is not easy to say where the brand starts and the person finishes with Tom Ford and it is ironic that the movie, as Pamela Gibson has underlined in *Fashion and*

⁶⁸ Lewis, T. (2010) “Branding, Celebritization and the Lifestyle Expert,” *Cultural Studies* 24(4): 580–98, p. 583.

⁶⁹ Driessens, O. (2013) “The celebritization of society and culture: understanding the structural dynamics of celebrity culture.” *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 16 (6). p. 641–657. ISSN 1367–8779

⁷⁰ Christy, G., “Designing Minds,” *The Hollywood Reporter. Fashion in Entertainment Special Issue*, 1998.

⁷¹ Christy, G., “Intersecting Patterns,” *The Hollywood Reporter. Fashion in Entertainment Special Issue*, 2001.

⁷² <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/how-tom-ford-became-the-toast-of-hollywood-1847009.html>.

Celebrity Culture, interestingly gives rise to a new form of auteur movie which looks like a series of commercials. Every detail oozes luxury, Tom Ford's brand of luxury.

In order to understand how it is possible that a designer can so easily turn into a well-received filmmaker – *A Single Man* has won several awards – one has to consider the status of celebrity in contemporary entertainment culture. The celebrity image is currently produced by hordes of stylists, publicists, marketers and agents, and celebrities themselves have become multi-taskers, no longer easily associated with a medium or an art field. While this allows the celebrity to be present in several markets and multiply the touch points, the result is that celebrity images lose their value. “Celebrity value now flows through multiple channels across numerous convergent media domains, resulting in easy migration from film to television to advert to webisode and beyond, including endlessly diversifiable branded products.”⁷³ Seen from this perspective, it is easier to understand Tom Ford's move, as we can consider *A Single Man* a “vanity” project⁷⁴ through which the celebrity-as-auteur tries to wrest agency back from the value-adding machine. Although no amount of vanity will guarantee audiences access to the “real” person behind the celebrity persona, *A Single Man*, and the following project, *Nocturnal Animals* (Tom Ford, 2016), can be read as a form of auteurism, or authoring, politics.

From Argentina to Pechino Express. The Marcelo Burlon case

Further exploring the link with fashion as spectacle, we will conclude this brief overview with the brilliant example of Marcelo Burlon, his brand County of Milan and the NGG Group he founded as a distributor of independent brands. Included in *Business of Fashion's* list of the most influential people of 2017, Marcelo Burlon is a singular case that enters our examination as an example of the increasingly pervasive mediatisation and fragmentation of fashion with an interesting effect on the distribution and support of young designers. As *GQ* wrote in a feature, “Milan-based Marcelo Burlon, is what you'd call a ‘slashie’ – a DJ/model/art director/party planner/publicist and now he can add ‘designer’ to that list...even though he's not a big fan of that title.”⁷⁵ Marcelo Burlon, half-Argentinian half-Italian, has channelled the various skills he has acquired over the years into his personal brand, County of Milan, founded in 2012 with Davide De Giglio and Claudio Antonioli. Famous for his shamanistic print T-shirts and smartphone cases, he has perfected his success and his position as an influencer, creating a new company, New Guards Group, which incorporates County of Milan and other young brands of similar style that do not have his distribution possibilities (Off White, Palm Angels, Heron Preston, Unravel Projects and many more). The group is set to end 2017 with a turnover of approximately €100 million and is one of few cases of an incubator/accelerator in the fashion sector.⁷⁶ His rise in the sector has been particularly swift. Since March 2011, when the *New York Times* dedicated a video to the creative Italian-Argentinian entitled *Marcelo Does Milan*, calling him “a pioneer of multitasking,” this polymath, surrounded by a team of professionals, has built a lifestyle brand thanks to a strategy that simultaneously translates the brand's idea of fashion into graphics, music, night-life, collaborations and acquisitions,⁷⁷ with a different media approach and narrative for his brand and for his distributor business. As Rocamora affirms:

Looking at mediatisation in the field of fashion means looking at the ways practices of fashion – practices of production, consumption, distribution and diffusion – are articulated through the media, and, more crucially, are dependent on the media for their articulation. The interest is not on the idea of communicating fashion through the media but on doing fashion through

⁷³ Kavka, M., “Hating Madonna and loving Tom Ford: gender, affect and the ‘extra-curricular’ celebrity,” in *Celebrity Studies*, 51-2, Routledge, London 2014, p. 59-74.

⁷⁴ To explore the notion of “vanity project” see Williams, R., “From Beyond control to in control: investigating Drew Barrymore's feminist agency/authorship” in S. Redmond and S. Holmes, eds., *Stardom and celebrity: a reader*, Sage Publications, London 2007, p. 111-125.

⁷⁵ <https://www.gq.com/story/behind-the-line-marcelo-burton-country-of-milan>

⁷⁶ <http://www.mffashion.com/it/archivio/2017/06/03/debutta-ngg-neonata-holding-dedicata-alla-moda>

⁷⁷ <https://i-d.vice.com/it/article/xwy9xk/10-cose-che-non-sapevate-su-marcelo-burlon>

the media. Investigating the mediatisation of fashion, then, means looking at the ways fashion practices have adapted to and been transformed by the media. It does not mean focusing on the media themselves, but on the ways people and institutions in the field of fashion have changed their practices for and with the media.⁷⁸

Marcelo Burlon does fashion through the media and social networks. He publishes daily Instagram Stories in which he shares different fragments of his hectic life between the club, the gym and the elevator. He is one of the biggest advocates of the trap music phenomenon in Italy and is a big fan of Dark Polo Gang. He was a competitor on the reality TV show *Pechino Express*. He does not do advertising and, more than acquire brands and distort creative processes, he distributes them and brings them in to this new marketing mix.

Conclusion

The analysis has illustrated the complexity and the diversity of the ongoing relationship between celebrity and fashion mediated by media. We try to cross the field of media studies, celebrity studies and the analysis of the fashion industry to demonstrate how the entertainment effect and logic of the franchise are at the basis of cultural production and contemporary fashion communication. Branding functions now require design of products and content in different times and spaces and understanding of these phenomena is clear by exploiting the principle of immersive brand worlds⁷⁹ each with its own style and galaxy of textual and non-content content. This is the reason why we agree that the cultural figure of the Celebrity Brand, in its diverse fashionable manifestations, is not an ephemeral event to be easily dismissed, instead it is a key constituent in the ongoing (re)invention of fashion in Global Capitalism.⁸⁰ Media-led promotional culture⁸¹ achieves a momentum and affect through technologies of fame and celebrity embedded in platforms such as YouTube, thereby generating opportunities for consumers to participate within what Jenkins calls “spaces for creative experimentation.”⁸² The outcome of this is commoditised Celebrity Brands, nourished and sustained by technologies of charisma and fame, and the fuel of public attraction. Celebrity Brands instigate an advantageous deployment of the ritualised potency of celebrity, engage the concept of co-branding with celebritisation, and use the media for the benefit of their own personal branding. Celebrity visibility, then, is used to consolidate the economic strategy of commoditisation for the products and the celebrity. We have seen how celebrities are entering the fashion map not only as endorsers but as economic and cultural producers of fashion, challenging and benefiting the fashion industry at the same time. Given the audience’s need for entertainment 24/7, celebrities feed that need challenging the old-fashioned business models based on seasons and traditional fashion intermediaries like print magazines, fashion journalists, Paris as fashion capital, fashion weeks, instead driving it towards a continuous stream of mediated production/consumption, helping to give rise to a new fashionscape, what Barbara Vinken has described as post-fashion. In her book *Fashion Zeitgeist: Trends and Cycles in the Fashion System*,⁸³ she writes that “the discourse of fashion is constructed by the correlation of three major conceptual articulations: the division of being and mere appearance; the division of the sexes; and – inseparably linked to the latter – the division of the classes.” Paraphrasing the well-cited words by economist and sociologist Werner Sombart that fashion is capitalism’s favourite child, she calls fashion “sociology’s darling” and proposes another reading of fashion, that takes into consideration fashion’s capacity to not only confirm existing gender and class divisions (the classical sociological perspective), but also expose them as artificial. While she had in mind radical fashions, we could apply his idea to post-celebrity fashion. Celebrities, in

⁷⁸ Rocamora, A., “Mediatization and Digital Media in the Field of Fashion,” *Fashion Theory*, 21:5, 505–522. DOI: 10.1080/1362704X.2016.1173349

⁷⁹ Grainge, P. *Brand Hollywood: Selling Entertainment in a Global Media Age*. Taylor & Francis, 2007, p. 176.

⁸⁰ Lash, S., Lury, C., *Global Culture Industry: The Mediation of Things*, Wiley, London 2007.

⁸¹ Wernick, A., *Promotional Culture: Advertising, Ideology and Symbolic Expression*, Sage, London 1991.

⁸² Jenkins, H., *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, NYU Press, New York 2006, p. 132.

⁸³ Vinken, B., *Fashion Zeitgeist: on Trends and Cycles in the Fashion System*, Berg, London 2005.

transforming the logic of fashion cultural production, break with the notion of fashion as the domain of a few elite power brokers, deconstructing traditional power structures and views on status, gender, class, race and age, with the paradoxical result of exposing the fashion system itself as an artifice, and therefore subject to endless reinvention.

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