Public relations has been a respected industry for nearly a decade and is used throughout countless industries to send out messages to the publics. PR can contribute to a fashion brand’s success by building and maintaining a positive social, business and political image for its publics. Studies have shown that a favourable perception by a customer benefits and lifts an organization’s market position. Through traditional fashion PR brands have been able to spread all sorts of messages concerning their products, their upcoming fashion lines, events or about pseudo news regarding the brand. Traditionally, this is done by sending out press releases or holding pitches for a third party like a fashion magazine editor. For years the publics were merely on the receiving end.

But a disrupting force has shaken things up.... The rise of the Internet! With the online era, communications industries, like PR, have to rapidly reinvent themselves. Consumers hold more power, practices (forcibly) become more transparent and the world seems to be connected twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

This magazine is focused on the future of fashion public relations. As the field is changing, it is important to ask yourself the following question: ‘are you embracing the changes or are you starting to fall behind?’ The aim of this magazine is to give you solid advice and to provide you with a set of tools that will help you to create a PR campaign that embraces the changes brought about by the Internet.

This magazine will give you all the tools you need to get ahead of the competition. It starts by giving a short overview of how traditional PR functions, it explains the influences of the Internet and provides you with an analytical model. This model is constructed based on five characteristics that are all connected to the changes created because of the Internet. Each characteristic first gets explained individually, to give you a more in-depth understanding of each of them. Afterwards, the analytical model is provided, with advice on how to test your current campaigns or on how to implement them in future campaigns. Diving even deeper into the theory, two postmodern campaigns are analysed for you to see the theory translated into practice. At the end of this magazine you will be ready to embrace the future of PR.

DON’T BE SQUARE, BE RARE!
Public relations once started off as a communication method used to seduce and manipulate consumers, perhaps better known as propaganda. However, the industry managed to move on from those extremes and develop itself into a useful and respected communication industry. But it seems that once again this industry is transforming and this time there is an impact so big that some professionals say that ‘nothing will ever be the same... you guessed right: the Internet! But before diving deeper into that: let’s have a look at how traditional PR is characterized.

The public relations industry falls under the marketing umbrella. Here it sits with other communication sciences such as branding, advertisement, and promotional marketing. However, although under the same umbrella, the industries are separated due to their nature. The difference between them? They are either paid, owned or earned media. Advertisement and marketing are seen as paid media. In traditional perimeters, owned media can be anything such as a brand’s webshop, magazine or website owned by the brand. Public relations falls in the category of earned media. In traditional PR, this means relying on for instance a journalist, editor or other third party for the spread of its message.

Following from that, a first characteristic of traditional PR is that it is free of costs, distinguishing itself from for instance advertisements or marketing. For example: a brand can buy space in a magazine to showcase a new product (advertisement), but that product could also get featured in the same magazine in an editorial spread (PR). Secondly, traditional PR is recognized by the fact that its message is spread by a third party (editor, journalist, news broadcaster) to get it across to its publics. This means traditional PR is strictly separated from marketing and advertisement, as those industries pay for their campaigns and therefore also control the placement of the publication itself. Thirdly, traditional PR practices are characterized by their often non-transparent nature. This means that a lot of PR practitioners, consciously or sub-consciously, implement one-way communication methods and do not often encourage dialogue between a brand and its publics. They use methods like press releases or product placement to distribute organisational information. However, this disables direct communication from an audience perspective, and furthermore, there are a lot of brands that currently don’t really want to participate in active conversations with there publics.

These methods are in line with the first three communication models that Grunig has designed to divide PR practices. The first being the press agent model, second the public information model, and third the two-way asymmetrical model. Despite that there are of course specific differences between these three models, it is sufficient to mention here that they all try use persuasion in their messages without creating dialogue. Moreover, traditional PR is characterized by trying to control the view of the public by using those persuasion and manipulation tactics to influence the public opinion, which also are found in the first three communication methods of Grunig mentioned above. Many organisations believe that it is more profitable for a brand to persuade its publics with the intent to control their behaviour, which as you will find out is definitely not the case. Lastly, the content of traditional PR messages generally focus on either products or pseudo-events. Many practitioners focus on the sales of their products or the positive endorsement of it. They try to obtain this through anything ranging from a free feature in magazines, newspapers, radio, television or other media channels.

Practitioners have implemented these methods for decades. However, probably even just reading through them makes you question: isn’t it time for an update? Of course, sales are important and so is getting the word out about your brand or latest product. Regardless, there are other, better, ways of doing this now.
THE INTERNET

'THE INTERNET HAS CHANGED EVERYTHING' IS A STATEMENT MADE BY PHILIPS & YOUNG BACK IN 2009. SOME PROFESSIONALS MIGHT SAY THAT THIS IS SOMEWHAT OF A STRONG CLAIM, HOWEVER IT IS WITHOUT A DOUBT THAT THE INTERNET HAS HAD A BIG INFLUENCE ON COMMUNICATION PRACTICES. BECAUSE OF THE INTERNET WE ARE NOW CONNECTED TO ANYONE, ANYWHERE AT ANY TIME. ANOTHER BIG CHANGE THAT HAS COME DUE TO THE INTERNET, IS THE UPRISE OF USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA WEBSITES AND APPLICATIONS. THINK OF SITES SUCH AS FACEBOOK, TWITTER AND INSTAGRAM. IN JANUARY 2014, RESEARCH SHOWED THAT 74% OF ONLINE ADULTS NOW USES SOCIAL NETWORKING WEBSITES (PEW CENTRE, 2014). IN 2016, 97% OF ADULTS, AGED BETWEEN 16 AND 64, SAY THEY HAVE VISITED OR USED A SOCIAL NETWORK WITHIN THE LAST MONTH (MANSFIELD, 2016).

THIS HAS A MASSIVE INFLUENCE ON THE WAY THAT CONSUMERS COMMUNICATE. IT IS THEREFORE IMPORTANT FOR PRACTITIONERS IN A COMMUNICATION INDUSTRY LIKE PR, TO MAKE SURE THAT THEY DO NOT DOGGEDLY COPY OLD COMMUNICATION TACTICS INTO THIS NEW LANDSCAPE.

BEFORE GIVING YOU HANDS-ON ADVICE ON HOW TO EMBRACE THESE CHANGES, WE WILL MAP OUT WHAT THIS NEW LANDSCAPE EXACTLY LOOKS LIKE BY GIVING FIVE DISTINCT CHARACTERISTICS THAT ARE LINKED TO THIS NEW FORM OF PR. AFTERWARDS WE WILL SHOW YOU HOW TO IMPLENT THESE CHARACTERISTICS AND PROVIDE YOU WITH TWO CASE STUDIES OF BRANDS THAT ALREADY EMBRACE THIS NEW MOVEMENT AND INCORPORATE THE FIVE CHARACTERISTICS.
THINK
ABOUT
THINGS
DIFFERENTLY
STOP WAITING
As explained earlier, PR started of as a communication method mainly used to seduce and manipulate consumers, which is perhaps better known as propaganda. Although the industry has managed to move away from this extremes, a lot of professionals, to a degree, still use persuasion and manipulation tactics in order to control the perception of their publics. Many believe that this is the best way of establishing their goals and this is how brands communicate with their publics.

The Internet and the uprise of social media platforms has not only changed how consumers interact with one and other, but moreover, how they interact with brands and organisations. Now more then ever, the Internet enables consumers to be connected, to hold brands accountable for their actions, to search for information on campaigns or products and even demand certain standards. Nowadays, consumers are spoiled for choice and if a brand has no interest in these new needs, the public will move on to someone who is interested. It is important to understand as a PR practitioner that copying old PR practices into new media formats is no longer useful.

The facts are, the Internet has been reshaping communication industries whether we like it or not. So rather then trying to hold on to the old, let’s make room for the new. This magazine talks about a whole new way practicing public relations and therefore we like to introduce its new name to you: Postmodern (fashion) public relations.

After extensive research, the term ‘postmodern’ has been found to describe this new form of PR. The new landscape shows a lot of similarities with the postmodern movement of the early twentieth century. Consumers are moving away from the ‘big truths’ like civilians back then moved away from big truths from institutions like the church. The consumer / civilian developed a greater sense of self-consciousness and they had a greater need for individualism and identification.

A similar thing is happening due to the rise of the Internet. Consumers are no longer surrendered to the laws laid down by brands. For a long time organisations were in control. They decided how much a consumer knew about products, production methods and so forth. As mentioned before public relations was often a way seducing a consumer rather then real communication between brand and publics.

However, postmodern public relations has moved away from this and has shifted its focus on a new way of practising PR....
I don’t know what the <a> </a>
I’m doing anymore.
IT IS TIME FOR CHAAAAANNGE!!!
The influence of the Internet has brought about certain changes, which are seen as the characteristics of postmodern PR.

Hereafter, each characteristic will get discussed separately. They form the postmodern PR model that can help you to analyse your previous, current or future PR campaigns. After this, a hands-on advice is provided on how to actually analyse and implement these changes into your own PR campaigns. The five distinct changes are divided into inherent characteristics and optional characteristics. The two are inherent and are: ‘giving up control’ and ‘transparency’. The last three are optional characteristics and are: ‘blurring lines’, ‘content is king’ and ‘current content’. With each characteristic it will be explained what they exactly entail and afterwards how they can get implemented into your future PR campaigns!
Characteristics
Giving up control is the first characteristic and is an inherent aspect of postmodern public relations. This is due to the fact that consumers can: talk about, post, share, retweet, review or blog without the consent of an organization as soon as a campaign is released. Therefore, it means that this aspect is automatically connected to postmodern PR. However, this does not necessarily mean that brands embrace or implement this characteristic yet.

Before the existence of the online world, organizations could more or less choose whether they wanted to give up control or not. Losing control in this sense means publishing a message on a medium that is open for publics to respond and share. MacNamara says that due to a more connected working field, organizations are being forced to let go of control over their PR messages.

Many public relations practitioners have lived under the false pretence that they can: “(1) Choose their publics, (2) Control the messages received by their publics, (3) Control the cognitive interpretations publics form about organisations and, (4) Can persuade publics to change their attitudes and behaviors”. Many theories show that publics create themselves and that they control the message to which they are exposed. So, although PR practitioners never had full control over the flow of information they send out to begin with, with the rise of Web 2.0 the little control they once had is diminishing. A characteristic of postmodern PR is therefore ‘giving up control’ (of the message after it gets sent out): members of publics can talk freely to each other about products and organisations, and information is widely available to everyone with little cost and effort. Because this characteristic is inherent, it is about to what degree a brand actively chooses to embrace it.
1. Giving up Control
TRANSPARENT
Traditional public relations is per definition either one sided communication and it often doesn’t allow/participate in two-way communication.

Although the Internet has enabled more transparency not yet all organizations embrace this new side of public relations.

Transparency inherently happens when an organization posts their campaign on a social networking website. The answer if this characteristic is implemented is therefore automatically answered with a yes.

However, an organization can choose to embrace a transparent, two-way communicating attitude. If you have and promote an active and communicative attitude towards your publics you embrace this postmodern characteristic.
Blurring lines is an optional characteristic, which shows us a lot has changed when it comes to how communication industries are being practiced. Previous to the existence of the internet all communication industries were part of the same umbrella but stood linear next to one and other. PR was solely seen as earned media, but now, rather then being parallel to the other communication industries, they overlap each other more and more. Owned media, due to the internet, now also includes a brand’s Facebook page, Twitter account, blog, Instagram and so on. These pages are free, and can therefor be seen as a part of PR. However, what this means is that a brand can feature a (paid) advertisement on their (owned) social media page, through which it gets spread for free (PR).
Due to the Internet there has been a shift in the importance of the content of a Public Relation expression. Rather than with traditional PR practices, the main focus is no longer the product, but on the story.

Before the Internet, the target group of a PR expression was mainly professional (journalist or editor) that had to publish a free story on a new product, event or pseudo news about a brand. However, focus of content is now shifting towards the public. They’re no longer just the receiving party, as the Internet enables brands to post their PR messages on their social media pages (explained earlier by blurring lines).

Moreover, to postmodern consumers it is more important that they can identify themselves with a message. Therefore the focus is no longer on just selling or promotion of a product but rather on the symbolic value of a campaign. This characteristic is about at the goal of the PR campaign. It should centralises symbolic value, (such as a political message or humour) rather then focussing on merely the product.
ENT KING
The fifth optional characteristic revolves around the connection to current events.

Due to the rise of the Internet, current content has become of greater importance than it was before. With consumers being connected 24/7, it is important that the message of a PR expression is current. Dan Neely, CEO of Networked Insights recently said that business on a global scale wasted $347 billion on marketing campaigns that were unsuccessful because of their content not being interesting to its targeted audience (2017). He says this has to do with the fact that now more then ever brands and agencies should focus on becoming and more importantly staying relevant, which in this case means staying current, to their customers.

If a brand is unable to connect with its audiences on a level that is relevant to them, they will move on and find a brand that does fulfill that requirement. However, if the content is able to connect to what consumers are looking for, the Internet works as a tool that enables direct, sometimes real-time individualized interaction with postmodern consumers. It builds consumer trust if a brand embraces hot-button issues or immerses humorous topics into their PR message, which can also contribute to a brand its authenticity.
YOU HAVE MET ALL THE FIVE CHARACTERISTIC! WE ARE HAPPY TO TELL YOU; YOU ARE ALMOST THERE - THE FUTURE.

WE WILL NOW PROVIDE YOU WITH THE TOOLKIT SO THAT YOU CAN TO TEST TO WHAT DEGREE YOUR CURRENT PR CAMPAIGNS IMPLEMENT THE POST-MODERNISTIC APPROACH OR IF YOU FEEL READY YOU CAN START TO DEVELOP A WHOLE NEW POSTMODERN PR CAMPAIGN! NOT ONLY IS IT EXPLAINED HOW TO TEST AND IMPLEMENT EACH CHARACTERISTIC, THEREAFTER TWO BRAND EXAMPLES ARE PROVIDED TO GIVE YOU SOME MORE INSPIRATION.
This second characteristic is also inherent. However, as with the first, it is about whether you embrace this change rather than trying to fight it.

With 100 million bloggers, and millions of consumers on social media, consumers are no longer just on the receiving end, but rather are one of many voices. It is safe to say that they will have an opinion on your campaign and perhaps will vocalise this on one of your social media pages.

According to MHP communications, being transparent is the most important factor when communicating with audiences. They found that 85% of global consumers see transparency and honesty as a crucial factor when a brand communicates its message.

If brands show an active and open communicative attitude towards its publics, it indicates they embrace this postmodern characteristic. If there is a comment section, and the brand actively replies and participates, the characteristic is present in the expression.

Reply to questions and comments on your social media pages and don’t be afraid to face hot-button topics. You should reach them on a level that closes the gap between you and them. Moreover, you could hold live-streams in which you openly invite your publics to communicate with you.

Although we mentioned that this characteristic is inherent, a brand can still choose to what degree they ‘let go of the control over their messages’.

As we have seen now, we never had full control over the minds of our publics but with the rise of the Internet this has become even less. Therefore, it is time you step back and trust your publics, by giving them more control over your campaigns.

This characteristic gets analysed by looking at how and if the campaign invites consumers to actively share, retweet or use a special hashtag created for a campaign, as this indicates a willingness from the brand to give up control.

When these elements are there, the characteristic is present in the expression.

It is important that you see publics as your journalist, editor or broadcaster and enable them to spread your campaign.

Ways to incorporate this characteristic is by creating a specific hashtag or by giving incentives for sharing a post. Of course if publics are excited, inspired, and intrigued by a message, the chances of that message receiving more likes, having more shares or reposts are even greater.

1. Giving up control

2. Transparency

Inherent characteristics:

1. Giving up control

2. Transparency
With this characteristic it is important to remember that PR:
1. is the distribution of a message for free
2. which gets obtained through a third party.
Traditional PR is characterised by being ‘earned media’ in which it depends on an editor or journalist to publish its messages.

It is important to combine various communication sciences for this postmodern characteristic. Rather than being linear, studies show it could be beneficial when industries overlap one another.

This happens when a campaign features an advertisement or marketing campaign on a free medium such as Instagram, Facebook or Twitter, which transforms a paid ad into a free PR campaign. When paid, owned and earned media are combined, the characteristic is present in the expression.

By posting your latest advertisement or marketing campaign on your social media pages you can transform this into your latest PR campaign without relying on editors or journalists to spread the message.

With social media becoming more prevalent, consumers are also becoming savvier to marketing of all kinds. As sites filled up with paid advertising, people began to ignore ads as they have in the past with paid advertising. A short solution was targeting ads by a person’s browser history, but this practice has become more transparent to customers as well.

This has started the shift from product focus to content in PR messages. Rather than with traditional PR practices, this postmodern PR characteristic no longer has the product as main focus, currently all eyes are on the story. This characteristic gets analysed by looking at the goal of the PR campaign.

If the campaign centralises symbolic value, (such as a political message or humour) rather than focussing on merely the product, this characteristic is present in the expression.

It is important that you forget about pushing your product. For these postmodern consumers it is important that they can identify themselves with what you are saying and they look for messages that have more than the direct purpose of ‘selling products’.

When you implement this characteristic you should find a story or topic that speaks to your target audience, and specifically focus on the sale of your product.

The rise in global connection has led to people having continuous access to the web, newsfeeds and social messaging sites. Increasingly, this has the effect that consumers are a lot more up to date about what is going on, to a certain degree anywhere in the world at any time.

It is therefore important that an organization utilizes current topicalities when creating and publishing a new PR campaign. If a campaign features a topic that is not older then 24 months, the characteristic is present in the expression.

If a campaign features a topic that is not older then twenty-four months, the characteristic is present in the expression.

When implementing this characteristic into your campaign it is important that make it about a current subject, event.
Diesel - Make Love Not Walls

This the Diesel ‘Make Love Not Walls’ campaign. The campaign features a colourful collection of actors that are having an amazing time, but suddenly get separated by a massive concrete wall. The crowds are clearly upset, until they get rescued by a rainbow coloured tank. It shoots heart shaped hole in the wall which allows the characters to reunite with each other. As the big finale, a female priest, dressed in pink, weds two Middle Eastern men. According to Diesel #makelovenotwalls is about tearing down the mental and physical wall that separate people and ‘let all sides come together in the name of unity and love’ (Diesel, 2017). Artistic Director Nicola Formichetti explains: “This happens in a crucial historical moment, where hate, walls and fear seem to prevail. Diesel wants to tear down these walls showing that a brighter and exciting tomorrow is possible. At Diesel, we take a strong position against hate and more than ever we want the world to know that,” explains “Love and togetherness is crucial in creating a society we all want to live in, and the future we all deserve.”(2017).

Inherent Characteristics

GIVING UP CONTROL Yes, of course this is a inherent characteristic, which therefore means it is present in the campaign. However, Diesel promoted its campaign by accompanying it with a specific hashtag, inviting people to share their campaign and message. It therefore means that they embrace this postmodern characteristic.

TRANSPARENCY Yes, Diesel showed a great example of embracing this inherent postmodern characteristic transparency. They took a lot of effort on replying to posts in the comment section, not backing down by sceptical comments, taking time to show appreciation for positive comments and answering questions of all sorts.

Optional Characteristics

BLURRING LINES Yes, this is a marketing campaign because the creation of the add has been paid for. Moreover, it is a brand story in which they take a political stance against the current president of the United States, Donald Trump. However, this is also a PR campaign because the content is sent out through social media, focusing on its publics to spread it and doing so for free.

CONTENT IS KING Yes, rather then seducing audiences into buying their latest jeans, with this campaign Diesel has tried to create a connection with their publics. For postmodern consumers it is important that they can identify themselves with a story a brand tells. Diesel evaluated what was of importance to (its) consumers and created a message coherent with the current events.

It reaches people on an emotional level rather then a consumption / seduction level.

CURRENT CONTENT Yes, this campaign is aimed to address the events evolving around 2017’s presidential election of the United States of America. One of the electoral campaign notes of the new elected president, Donald Trump, was that he would build a wall between the US and Mexico in order to keep ‘unwanted immigrants’ out of the States. Some brands showed that they did not approve of these statements and felt like their target audience would feel the same. Diesel chose to imbed a current hot-button issue into its campaign.
MAKE LOVE NOT WALLS
Adidas created a new campaign in which they reaffirm that originality and individualism is important to them. A remix of the song ‘I did it my way’ by Frank Sinatra plays throughout the whole film. With this campaign Adidas faces towards the new generation of creators to inspire them to ‘redefine their message of originality’ (Adidas, 2017). With this add the brand is exploring the idea of driving culture forward and that the publics can recreate the idea of what is truly original.

**INHERENT CHARACTERISTICS**

**Giving Up Control** Yes, Adidas created a special hashtag #Originalis, showing incentive that they wanted people to actively participate and share this message.

**Transparency** Yes, Adidas replies to many different types of messages. Whether it is answering questions about products or with humorous messages or emoji’s. Moreover, Adidas seems to really grasp this characteristic, as they host special livestream talks with their audiences on various topics; such as ‘does social media encourage originality or uniformity in the sneaker culture?’.

**OPTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS**

**Blurring Lines** Yes, this is a clear example of the characteristic ‘blurring lines’. This is a film as part of a marketing campaign, used as an advertisement to tell their brand story but posted on their social media pages, which makes it postmodern PR.

**Content is King** Yes, the film does not focus itself on the promotion of Adidas products but merely on spreading its message concerning the redevelopment of originality.

**Current Content** Maybe. Need for individualisation and originality is an important subject to the post-modern consumer. It is difficult to pin individualisation and originality into a time frame but it does seem to be focussing on a subject that lives with their target group.
YOU MADE IT!
MADE IT!
YOU HAVE MADE IT. YOU TRAVELED TO THE PAST, VISITED THE PRESENT, TO FINALLY ARRIVE HERE IN THE FUTURE.
YOU NOW KNOW THE CHANGES BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE INTERNET, WHAT EACH OF THEM ENTAILS AND HOW TO ANALYSE AND INCORPORATE THEM INTO YOUR PR CAMPAIGNS.
I would like to dedicate this magazine to my crazy but best possible friends, Jason, Romi & Dennis, my amazing and caring boyfriend, Brett and my loveling and patient parents. Without their immense support, love and patience, I wouldn’t have been able to get to this point today. I want to give a special thanks to Jason, my twin, without whom I might not have graduated at all.