IS IT WORTH IT?
— PR EVENTS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO BRAND EQUITY IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY

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Abstract
All fashion brands work with PR in some way, its importance is evident. At the same time it is expensive and difficult to say what it provides, consequently one may wonder whether if it is all worth it. Existing literature leaves a gap of missing research in PR and especially in PR events. The purpose of this thesis is to contribute with an increased understanding of PR events in the fashion industry, by an open approach. In more detail, the purpose is to explore the fundamental aspects of PR events in the fashion industry, and how such events contribute to brand equity. The method used was a qualitative case study, including descriptive and exploratory research methods. The data collection consists of participant observations, during an internship at a PR agency, and semi structured interviews with five participants. A cross case synthesis analysis method was used with a comparative approach. The fundamental aspects of PR events and its contribution to brand equity, was found to differ and depend to a great extent. The main dependent variable is the strategy and objective of the brand. The findings show that a PR event is a marketing activity and a communication tool/channel, of which the end goal is to create sales. Important aspects include relationships, reputation/image and experiences. PR events contribute to brand awareness and brand associations, however the contribution to perceived quality and brand loyalty was found to be less evident. PR events may have a positive effect, negative effect, or no effect. It is possible to evaluate events to some extent. Quantitative and qualitative aspects are discussed, both as possible and less usable methods. The results were found to be wide and extensive, opening up for more questions rather than providing answers. Future research could narrow the scope to a less extensive range of PR events, in order to generate answers that may be more useable. The data collection methods could, for the same reason, be more structured. The study adds knowledge to existing theories to the area of PR events. By the open approach, this study draws attention to the rather unexplored and undiscovered topic of PR events, and brings focus to the discussion of its value. The qualitative research method brings attention to considering both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. The findings are of interest to brands that use or consider using PR events, and want to gain a more clear picture of the events and their contributions to brand equity.

Keywords: PR, PR events, brand equity, brands, consumers, fashion industry
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1 Introduction

In this chapter the topic of the thesis is introduced. The background to and the problematization of the topic are presented, leading to the purpose of the study along with research questions and expected contribution. To further specify the topic of the thesis, the unit of analysis is described along with delimitations. Finally the outline of the thesis is presented by the demonstration of each chapter including short descriptions of their contents.

All fashion brands work with public relations (PR) in some way. Either they have a specific department to carry out the work, outsource it to an agency, or do a combination of both. Regardless of how companies operate, the major role of PR is evident in order for companies to survive in the ever-changing and dynamic fashion industry. At the same time it is difficult to say what exactly PR provides. PR as with anything has a price, and when companies need to save money it is often the marketing budget that gets cut off first (Salus 2015). This constitutes the fundamental problem of this thesis; everyone does it, it is important, it is expensive, and consequently one may wonder whether if it is all worth it.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The PR concept

As well as PR is a well-known profession, the concept is also famous for being rather wide and commonly confused with marketing, promotion and advertising. Some argue that marketing is the overall process of communicating and delivering products to the market, where the activities of sales promotion, advertising and PR are included (Kotler 2009). Others mean that marketing research focuses on consumers and products while the PR worldview takes the more inclusive perspective on society (McKie & Willis 2012). As well as the difference and relation between these concepts are diffuse, PR has different translations which are more or less wide. Kotler (2009) argues that PR is about promoting and protecting a company’s image, Hutton (1999) emphasizes relationships, while Hagan (2011) further also includes both the management of reputation and relationships to the concept as well as issues and crisis management. The debate of how the different concepts in this area differ from each other and what the precise definition of PR is, do not have any well-established and generally accepted answers. In the literature, two aspects are more frequently addressed; relationship and reputation/image. When the PR concept is used in this report, it is these two aspects of PR that is focused on and referred to. Regarding the relation between PR and marketing, the decision was made to accept the view of Kotler (2009) in the sense that PR is a part of the comprehensive marketing topic.

1.1.2 The role of PR for brands in the fashion industry

The major role and importance of marketing, including PR, are evident. “Marketing is a significant dimension of any business in today’s highly competitive environment and financial success is often dependent on marketing ability” (Kotler 2009, p. 4). “The heart of your business success lies in its marketing...without marketing, your business may offer the best products or services in your industry, but none of your potential customers would know about it” (Lorette NA). Consequently, PR enables companies to make consumers aware of the company’s existence, to make them aware of who you are and what you offer. PR is thereby, according to Hagan (2011), a critical management function with great value. In accordance with McKie and Willis (2012), Hagan (2011) base her argument on the dynamic environment of today, the relevance of public opinion and the power of the media. It is indeed a challenge to survive in the dynamic and changing scenery of the fashion industry where the competition
is high and consumers picky. This makes it important for companies to both making sure that consumers know of them, but also to make them favour you. The specific fashion industry that is referred to in this thesis is the seasonal fashion industry of apparel and accessories. Seasonal fashion may apply to a number of ways in how to divide the fashion industry. However in this study, it includes brands that offer apparel and accessories in four seasonal collections per year.

The challenge of the ever-changing nature of the fashion industry may be linked to the phenomenon of brands. Fashion brands in comparison to other brands have a more experiential nature (Kendall 2009). This means that the consumer does not only seek for something to wear but for something more and that a white t-shirt may obtain more value if it is labelled for example Chanel instead of H&M. In this situation the customers think favourably of not just the characteristics of the product itself, but also of what the brand has added to the products in terms of immaterial aspects. Arvidsson (2006, p. 5) argues “it is not the products as much as the brands that matters”. The common situation is that you purchase a Louis Vuitton bag instead of just a bag. Buying the branded product you also buy a style, an identity, experience and feeling. Using the words from the academic literature, you get access to the brand identity, personality and image. The umbrella concept for these immaterial values that brands possess is brand equity, which Kendall (2009, p. 371) defines as “what consumers know and think about a particular brand and how well that awareness influences them to seek out and use the brand”. The author further describes it as “the power of brands”, which may be explained in two different ways; partly as consumers’ subjective perception of the brand, which is based on their experiences of the brand, and partly as the brands promise to consumers which is owned and distinctive (Kendall 2009, p. 16).

Mikáčová and Gavlaková (2014, p. 836) argue that the role of PR in branding includes two aspects; “creator of the narrative, i.e. the conversation” and “the purveyor of the medium to facilitate the conversation, i.e. social media”. The first aspect refers to that brands have an identity/image/personality, a story of who they are and what they stand for. PR here creates and tells that story, the narrative, to the public. The second aspect refers to that PR provides credibility of and trust to the story. Through PR, fashion brands may build among others brand awareness, identity, image, associations, loyalty, reputation, and further brand equity. By building strong brands you generate a positive impact on consumer behaviour and decision-making processes, as well as on their response to marketing activity (Hoeffler & Lane Keller 2003). In that way, PR may help you build a strong brand, that further responses to PR in a more desirable way. In short, to influence the audience to think favourably of the brand and to understand, adapt and create new strategies to meet the challenges of the dynamic environment is essential.

1.1.3 PR events
The different types of PR activities used are numerous. A certain PR activity that is commonly used within the fashion industry is events. An example is Fashion Week in cities such as Paris, New York, London and Milan, which probably are the most prominent PR events within the industry. As Fashion Week organiser Simon Lock (2013) explains it;

“Fashion weeks currently do a lot more than promote wholesale collections. They are also a catalyst that allows the industry to collaborate, to compete, to exchange ideas, to launch new products, and to introduce new blood. We need this seasonal exchange to maintain our relevance and to push ourselves to grow and explore.”
Even though the importance of PR is obvious, the importance of specifically PR events may be questioned.

There is an increasing trend of consumers wanting an experience, wanting to be engaged in the brand. Consumers do not just want a physical product, but also what comes with it. They want an image, an identity. This is not something new. What on the other hand is not as clear, and which is starting to become more and more used by brands, is engaging consumers in the brand and focusing on experiences. Two examples of companies that have done this with great success are Herschel Supply Co and Vans. They empower their audience by involving them in the conversation, for example by the use of social tags, and in the creation of content. They focus on encouraging, inspiring and creating engagement by for example events, competitions and using consumers contents on their own social media (Adelton 2015; Adelton 2014). They focus on storytelling. Herschel Supply Co has for example succeeded to create the image of heritage, nostalgia, loyalty and wanderlust, even though the company was established only seven years ago. Storytelling is powerful; “stories have the power to inform, persuade, elicit emotional responses, build support for coalitions and initiatives, and build civil society…Storytelling is a staple of public relations, from crisis, to branding, to identity, to reputation” (Kent 2015, p. 480).

In the examples of Herschel Supply Co and Vans, experience is a big part of the brand. The trend of focusing on this is evident and by Econsultancy’s quarterly Digital Trend report a top priority with no exceptions; “It’s official. Customer experience is in charge” (Travis 2016, p. 4). “The new marketing era, the experiential marketing era, focuses on giving target audiences a fabulous brand-relevant customer experience that adds value to their lives, and ultimately makes the consumer remember the brand’s marketing – not because it is shouted the loudest, but because it gave them an unforgettable experience” (Smilansky 2009, p. 1).

With an event you create the opportunity to provide an unforgettable experience. Through that experience you tell the story of the brand, build on relationships, awareness, associations and so on, and in all these aspects the consumer is a part of it. You engage consumers in the experience and through that build and develop brand equity. Thereby, PR events may be a beneficial way of influencing the consumers to think favourably of you. In that sense, the contextual background to the issue of this thesis is not only the influence of the brands themselves in the marketing process in the textile value chain, but also the influence of consumers.

It should be mentioned that not all brands use events to the same extent. Some may not use it at all. However, in the case of the Swedish fashion designer Ida Sjöstedt, the fashion shows are the only marketing activities during the year that they plan and budget (Ljung 2016). She explains the reason to be that it generates so many different things; it gives her social media, press, pictures, the opportunity for an international break through et cetera. It also provides her with the opportunity of expressing the brand exactly how she wants to, to convey the vision and feeling, which is in her opinion incredible important.

PR events are important but also expensive. Companies put a lot of time, money and effort to it. Taking the example of fashion shows of well-known brands such as Chanel or Prada, there is really no limit to what it may cost. Not only the venue, models, stylists, hair and make-up, lighting, invitations and marketing of the event is included in the budget, but also the front-row audience. To have Beyoncé watching your show may cost you 100 000 dollars (Weisman 2013). Naturally, the costs vary and not all companies pay to get Beyoncé or Kim Kardashian in the audience. However, the big brands and designers tend to go all in so to speak and spend
tremendous sums of money. Such as when Karl Lagerfeld was the designer of Fendi and put on a fashion show at the great Chinese wall, it took over a year to plan and it cost ten million dollars (Leen 2014). The usefulness of events today may thereby be investigated.

1.1.4 Is it worth it?

Imran Amed (2015) founder, CEO and editor-in-chief of The Business of Fashion is one of the critics to fashion shows;

“What's the purpose of a fashion show in today's world?...Will anyone really care about these clothes once they finally arrive in stores? Or will they have already moved on to the next season? Or is it all just about brand marketing?”

Companies put a lot of time, money and effort to PR events, and at the same time it is unclear what they actually contribute with and what exact value is derived from them. Basically one may question whether it is all worth it. More than 30 years ago Grunig (1977) brought up the issue of PR professionals who just did what they do without having to justify the amount of money they spent. As they nowadays need to justify it, the issue is instead how they may do so.

It is generally known that the marketing budget is the first one that companies cut down when they need to save money (Salus 2015). One reason may be because it is not clear what it actually accomplishes. Although Rego, Billett and Morgan (2009) argue the opposite, that during times of economic uncertainty companies should instead protect and even sometimes increase the brand equity investments. The authors mean that it is not as simple as many want to do, to link marketing activities with returns, as you neglect the risk aspect and marketing’s role of minimizing it. However, as Keller and Lehmann (2003) put it, financial investments in marketing activities do not guarantee improved brand equity.

The issue of not knowing whether it is worth the investment is not limited to monetary concerns. Except for the financial aspect, the technological development may oppose the use of PR events. With the new digital trends of the Internet and social media, new channels such as Facebook and Instagram (to only mention a few) have been introduced, and changed the way companies work within this field. Some even call it the new digital age, such as Scott (2013) in his book The New Rules of Marketing & PR. However, some mean that if you virtualize a real life experience some aspects are lost in the translation (Ljung 2016). In that sense, it is a substantial difference from when you are there in person or watching it on a picture or video. They mean that a real life experience cannot really be compared with a digital experiencing, such as a perfect edited fashion picture or video. Attending a live concert and watching it on video are two quite different experiences.

The problem is an issue for companies, as they do not know whether their PR events pay off or not, and they have a hard time to figuring it out. This constitutes the applied background to the fundamental problem of the thesis. As most companies engage in PR events in some way, and want to know if it pays off, the demand for solving the problem is great. However, it should be mentioned that there are companies that strive to evaluate it, and some that do not.

The contextual background arises in the field of textile management, which is the management of the textile value chain (Research and education board 2011). Textile management is an extensive subject involving various stages and elements working from and towards consumers. This thesis addresses specifically the marketing part of the value chain. Both roles of the company and the consumer are considered in the process of developing
brands PR and further brand equity. Thereby the downstream as well as the upstream process are taken into account. The downstream process comprises brands definition of what image they strive to create and obtain in the eyes of their consumers. In the upstream process the consumer plays a part in defining and creating the associated image and further what brand equity the brand come to have.

1.1.5 Evaluating PR events and their contribution to brand equity

In order to solve the fundamental problem of not knowing what the PR efforts bring, researchers have tried to come up with ways of evaluating and measuring this. Companies want results, return-on-investments. In order to investigate whether the efforts are paying off, the aspect of effectiveness has been prominent in literature studies of the problem. The hierarchy-of-effects model of Lavidge and Steiner (1961), addressing advertising effectiveness, has been influential in studies of measuring marketing effectiveness for some time. Addressing the effectiveness of marketing communications, Zenkin and Dolya (2007) offer the Index 3K model where the level of influence of the target market is examined. The list of research contributions to measure marketing effectiveness is long and extensive. However, the findings are diverse and unclear, not offering a distinctive way of dealing with the issue. The extensive literature also takes a somewhat wide perspective on what is evaluated. Literatures on marketing, marketing communications and advertising are comprehensive, but the specific area of PR is dealt with only marginally.

Some literatures do address the area of PR. For example Lindenmann (1997) developed minimum standards for measuring PR effectiveness, which were defined as four major PR evaluation components; (1) setting specific measurable PR goals and objectives, (2) measuring PR outputs representing the short-term perspective, (3) measuring PR outcomes representing the long-term perspective, and (4) measuring business and/or organizational outcomes. Even though Lindenmann (1997) offers evaluation components, there is an absence of a specific method on how to evaluate these. Literatures on specifically PR events are even more absent. As Gijsenberg (2014) discusses in an article about measuring marketing effectiveness of sport events, researchers attention of this is scarce and research regarding marketing effectiveness around events is limited. What may be seen as a close try is the model of Gottlieb, Brown and Ferrier (2014), which measures consumer perceptions of trade show effectiveness. However, this model addresses specifically trade show events in three specific industries, thereby the validity of the main idea with visitors evaluating the effectiveness by the identified factors in the model may be questioned in other PR events and other industries.

Addressing the question of “will it ever be fully possible to qualitatively measure the benefit of a public relations strategy to a business, or brand?”, Rathnayake (2014) gives two answers where the short one is a simple no. The longer one describes three levels where PR may be measured; (1) outputs such as reach and content impacting media/channels, (2) outcomes such as knowledge and attitudes impacting target groups, and (3) business results such as market share impacting organizations. The author argues that while the outputs and business results can be measured, the outcomes cannot. What measurement models can do however, is to help minimize accidents and maximize the potentials of PR activities (Rathnayake 2014). In that way PR is important, even though it cannot really be measured. Ljung (2016) further argues that the financial value and publicity of fashion events are difficult to measure but that it is a part of the fashion industry, which demands a hype/buzz to keep it alive.
The literature regarding effectiveness is extensive yet often focused on marketing as a whole, leaving a gap of missing research specifically in PR and further in PR events. The proposed answers that do exist are diverse and unclear. Reviewing the literature, the focus on effectiveness is evident. However, this focus may be questioned, as the effect itself may not be that obvious. Examining the effectiveness of something when the effect is unspecified may seem like skipping a step in the investigation process. PR event is a concept difficult to get a grip on. Depending on the industry, company, situation, target market et cetera they may look different, have different objectives and most likely have different effects. A crucial aspect when it comes to evaluating the efforts of PR events, is determining what exactly you wish to look at. Depending on whether you focus on for example the financial aspects such as sales or the level of reached consumers, one single event may be evaluated as both a success and a failure.

The first evaluation component in the minimum standards for measuring PR effectiveness developed by Lindenmann (1997, p. 395) is also stated as the most important one, as the author argues that effectiveness cannot be measured “unless they first figure out exactly what it is they are measuring that something against.” The first step is thereby stating what you want to accomplish with the PR. In terms of evaluating PR events, it may further be interpreted as important to state what aspects the evaluation will focus on in order for the research to be valid.

Regarding what evaluation aspects to focus on, this study concentrates on the contribution of PR events to brand equity. As with the literature of marketing effectiveness, there is extensive literature regarding marketing and brand equity. From the literature we learn that brand equity has a positive influence on market outcomes (Huang & Sarigöllü 2012; Lo 2012; Stahl, Heitmann, Lehmann & Neslin 2012; Szöcs 2014). What is interesting though is what happens before, that is what creates and develops brand equity. Literature on this matter often concerns the areas of marketing, marketing communications, advertising and sales promotion, with little reference to PR in specific (Buil, de Chernatony & Martinez 2013; Tufail, Saeed, Zameer, Bilal & Naeem 2014; Valette-Florence, Guizani & Merunka 2011; Yoo, Donthu & Lee 2000). What is common for these examples is the call for addressing specific product categories and/or brands, and Tufail et al. (2014) even point out that future research should address the role of PR in this. One exception is Dospinescu (2014) who studies the impact of a PR event on brand identity. However, this article examines the brand of a city and considers the single aspect of brand awareness for the development of brand identity. The study, as the most in this area, holds a quantitative character. Sasmita and Mohd Suki (2015) further address brand equity, but in the sense of how brand awareness, image, associations and loyalty impact brand equity, with a focus on young consumers and social media. Hence, investigating it from the source (in this case a PR event) and its impact on the different aspects, which further contributes to brand equity, may add valuable knowledge to this matter.

The literatures regarding evaluation of marketing efforts are extensive yet often focused on marketing as a whole, leaving a gap of missing research specifically in PR and an even bigger gap regarding PR events. Research of a specific product/brand category within this field is narrow, leaving a gap for examining the seasonal fashion industry. The literatures that do exist have been identified to have a quantitative method. A qualitative study of the topic has not been found, which may argue for taking the qualitative method into account. Within the field of research regarding the contribution of PR to brand equity, the specific activity of events is barely existent. The identified gap focusing on the contribution of PR to brand equity is illustrated in table 1, which represents a selection of existing literature.
Table 1. Selection of existing literature regarding the contribution of PR to brand equity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author and year</th>
<th>Research topic</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Product/brand category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yoo, Donthu and Lee (2000)</td>
<td>Contribution of price, store image, distribution intensity, advertising spending, and frequency of price promotions to brand equity</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Coffee, athletic shoes and cars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valette-Florence, Guizani and Merunka (2011)</td>
<td>Contribution of brand personality and sales promotion to brand equity</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Coffee, athletic shoes and cars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buil, de Chernatony and Martínez (2013)</td>
<td>Contribution of advertising and sales promotion to brand equity</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Coffee, athletic shoes and cars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tufail et al. (2014)</td>
<td>Contribution of sponsorship and publicity to brand equity</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Coffee, athletic shoes and cars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dospinescu (2014)</td>
<td>Contribution of a PR event to brand identity, focusing on brand awareness</td>
<td>The brand of a city</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sasmita and Mohd Suki (2015)</td>
<td>Contribution of brand awareness, brand image, brand associations and brand loyalty to brand equity, giving focus to young consumers and social media</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>The brand of a city</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.2 Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this thesis is to contribute with an increased understanding of PR events in the fashion industry, by an open approach. In more detail, the purpose is to explore the fundamental aspects of PR events in the fashion industry, and how such events contribute to brand equity. The purpose of contributing with an increased understanding by an open approach considers the fact that there is no well-established and generally accepted definition of PR. Existing literature of PR (and PR in relation to brand equity) is narrow, with even less reference to PR events. It is an unclear and comprehensive topic, in need of exploration and discovering. Depending on various aspects PR events may look different, have different objectives and most likely have different effects. The inclusion of the downstream and upstream processes in the textile value chain further adds the complexity of different perspectives on the matter. With the open approach, the strive is to explore and discover the topic by taking all this into account.

The fundamental issue, as discussed above, is whether the efforts of PR events are worth the investments. Companies are seldom in the situation where they can just do whatever they feel like. They need their actions to be accountable. As with anything, there are both positive and negative aspects with PR events. In short, the issue is thereby whether the positive aspects are worth the negative ones. However, this question may have different answers depending on what you relate it to. Having said that, this thesis focus on the impact on brand equity. Furthermore, in order to take into account that the positive aspects may not surpass the negative ones, the aim is to explore how PR events contribute to brand equity. In order to investigate how PR events contribute to brand equity, there is firstly a need for determining what the different aspects of PR events are. Even though the focus in this study is on a specific industry and product category (brands in the seasonal fashion industry offering apparel and accessories), the events may differ vastly depending on the brand, situation et cetera, which makes it a challenging quest. Thereby the decision was made to strive to catch the most fundamental aspects in order to get a basic overview. Accordingly the whole process is of interest, including the time aspects of before, during and after the event takes place. Instead of examining the concept in detail, the aim is to describe what usually happens in a PR event. The different aspects are not excluded to one specific component, but instead
comprehensive to include various areas such as operational, success factors and outcomes. Consequently, the research questions of this thesis are:

1. What are the fundamental aspects of PR events in the fashion industry?
2. How do PR events contribute to brand equity in the fashion industry?

By the open approach, this study draws attention to the unexplored and undiscovered topic of PR events, and brings focus to the discussion of its value. The expected contribution is to add knowledge to existing theories. The contribution is partly to add theories to the research area of PR events, focusing on a specific industry and product category. Further, the thesis contributes to an increased understanding of the fundamental aspects of PR events, as well as how such events contribute to brand equity. As mentioned, existing literature skip a step in the research process as they give much focus to the effectiveness of PR events. When the effect itself may not be that obvious, the thesis contributes by giving attention to this matter. Finally, the qualitative research method is added to the extensive field of quantitative research. The additional perspective that a qualitative approach generates, may give rise to other insights, which the quantitative approach and perspective have not. The contributions may be of practical use for brands that are using or think of using PR events, and want to gain a more clear picture of their contributions to brand equity.

1.3 Unit of analysis and delimitations

In order to clearly describe the approach of this thesis, the unit of analysis figure as seen above was developed (figure 1). What is apparent in the figure is that the main entity examined is the phenomenon of PR events. The three concepts brand equity, brand and consumer surrounding the main variable, constitutes the main factors that are analysed in the strive to better understand the phenomenon of PR events. The brand and consumer variables constitute two different perspectives on PR events; the downstream company perspective and the upstream consumer perspective. The brand equity variable represents the focus regarding the contribution of PR events. The thesis examines how the interaction occurs in between these concepts, having the assumption of a casual relationship of that PR events contribute to brand equity. The first research question gives answer to the single PR event variable, while the second research question gives answer to the figure as a whole.

The most prominent delimitation of the thesis is the specific industry of seasonal fashion in apparel and accessories. Therefore the unit of analysis figure is placed in the context of that specific industry and product category. By concentrating on the specific activity of PR events, it is only this that is addressed in the PR context. As mentioned, the evaluation of something may have different outcomes depending on what the focus is. The delimitation to look at...
brands and the contribution of PR events to their brand equity was made. Furthermore, the decision of focusing on the Danish market was made. Delimitating the thesis to a geographic area may provide the thesis with an increased possibility for generalization in that specific area, even though generalisation is not the purpose of the study.

1.4 Thesis outline

Above the background to and the topic of the thesis is introduced along with purpose, research questions, expected contribution and delimitations. Following the introduction, the outline of the thesis includes the following chapters; conceptual framework, methodology, results, analysis, discussion and finally conclusions and future recommendations. The conceptual framework explains and defines the central concepts of the thesis presented in the unit of analysis figure, and guides the data collection. The methodology chapter addresses how the purpose will be fulfilled and the research questions answered, including research approach, design and process. Findings from the data collection are presented in the results chapter, and are further analysed in relation to the research questions, applying the theories from the conceptual framework. The analysis leads to a discussion including considerations of the content of the thesis. Finally a conclusion, including answers to the research questions, and recommendations for future research are offered.
2 Conceptual framework

This chapter explains and defines the concepts in the unit of analysis figure (figure 1) in order to provide the reader an understanding of these central topics. Instead of the PR event concept, which is presented in the figure, PR in general is discussed in this chapter. PR is a wide and unclear concept, and therefore it needs to be clarified first in order to understand the specific are of PR events. The PR events concept is the topic of this thesis and is thereby addressed throughout the thesis. A conceptual framework model of brand equity is presented, which along with the theories presented in this chapter, guides the data collection and analysis process.

2.1 PR

As well as PR is a well-known profession, the concept is also famous for being rather wide and easily confused with marketing, promotion and advertising. Even though they are very much related to each other they are all separate substances with individual traits and should be addressed accordingly. Kotler (2009) argues that marketing is the overall process of communicating and delivering products to the market and that promotion, which is one of the components in the marketing mix, is a combination of various promotion tools such as sales promotion, advertising and PR. In this view, marketing also includes the other components of the marketing mix; product, price, place, process, people and physical evidence. PR, sales promotion and advertising are mentioned as three out of five major communication tools in the marketing communications mix (Kotler 2009). What differs between the communication activities is that sales promotion are short-term incentives to create sales, advertising is paid media by an identified sponsor and PR is about promoting and protecting the company’s image and offerings (Kotler 2009). This view stands for the opinion of that PR is a relatively narrow part of the more overarching subject of marketing. In contrast some argue for the opposite, that PR is more comprehensive than marketing, which has a more narrow focus. McKie and Willis (2012) proclaim that marketing in the beginning was focused on sales and consumers, and that it still is, while PR has a more holistic worldview. The authors mean that PR deals with the dynamic and fast-moving world that we live in today, filled with uncertainty and unpredictably, by understanding, adapting and creating new strategies of how to deal with it. Relationship building beyond the consumers helps companies to meet the contemporary challenges. Hence, as marketing research focuses on consumers and products, the PR worldview takes the more inclusive perspective on society.

As well as the difference and relation between these concepts are unclear, the definition of PR has different translations which are more or less wide. Kotler (2009, p. 762) defines PR as “a variety of programmes designed to promote or protect a company’s image or it’s individual products”. Hutton (1999, p. 208) on the other hand emphasizes relations as he defines PR as “managing strategic relationships”, having different situational roles including different primary functions performed and tactics/tools utilized, all depending on the context. The situational roles are identified as persuader, advocate, educator, crusader, information provider and reputation manager. Further Hagan (2011, p. 44) states that “public relations is relationship management, reputation management, issues management and crisis management”, and thereby assigns a broader perspective to the concept. The debate of how the different concepts in this area differ from each other, and what the precise definition of PR is, have no well-established and generally accepted answer. Considering the similar yet contradictory views of Kotler (2009), McKie and Willis (2012) and Hutton (1999), one may say that PR is basically about conveying a positive image to the public in order to make them
think favourably of the company. This is a very simplified definition, an issue that Hutton (1999, p. 211) addresses and strives to avoid; “Managing strategic relationships offers a parsimonious definition of public relations that is easily communicated, relevant for both theory and practise, and not so broad as to be meaningless nor so narrow as to be overly limiting”. By reviewing the literature two aspects were more frequently addressed; relationship and reputation/image. In the following when the PR concept is used, it is these two aspects of PR that is focused on and referred to. Regarding the relation between PR and marketing, the decision was made to accept the view of Kotler (2009) in the sense that PR is a part of the comprehensive marketing subject.

2.2 Consumers

In the unit of analysis figure (figure 2, p. 8), the different perspectives on PR events are roughly divided into two sides, one referred to as consumers. The consumer concepts is often mixed together with the concept of customers. Existing theories differ, although the common view is while customers basically are people who buy products, the consumer concept is somewhat more complex. Naturally there are researchers who choose to simplify it, such as Kendall (2009) who without adornment argues consumers are buyers, potential buyers and/or users of products/services. Here consumers are linked to specific actions, which may be more relevant to describe the action of consumption. Even though this is obviously also a part of the consumer concept, Arvidsson (2006, p. 18) further adds psychological considerations to the concept as he argues they use goods productively; they buy and use them for a reason, such as “to construct social relations, shared emotions, personal identity or forms of community”. Sassatelli (2007), agreeing with consumers being a social phenomena, takes is to the next level arguing that we are born into and live in a consumer culture where we exert consumer agency, which involves how consumers behave and make sense of what they do.

Consumer behaviour has for a long time been of interest for marketers, as they need to understand how consumers make sense of what they do in order to influence them. Schiffman, O’Cass, Paladino, D’Alessandro and Bednall (2011) in their book Consumer Behaviour divide the subject into two categories; the consumer as an individual and consumers in their social and cultural settings. The first category involves (1) needs and motivation; such as physiological arousal of hunger or environmental arousal of the smell of food, (2) personality; psychological characteristics that determine how we behave such as the need for uniqueness, (3) perception; how we act and react based on perceptions, how we select, organise and interpret stimuli, such as choosing to read an Levis ad that we see and think that the quality of the jeans is good, (4) learning; how we acquire the purchase and consumption knowledge and experience and apply it to future behaviour, (5) and attitudes; learned predisposition to behave in a consistently favourably/unfavourably way with respect to a given product/brand. The second category involves (1) social influences from companies, media, family, friends, and the strive to influence ones social class (status, lifestyle profiles), identity, social competition. The second category also involves (2) culture; the learned beliefs, values and customs.

Consumer research is of high interest as companies are dependent on consumers. If the consumer disappear, so does the company. The consumers need to be aware of you and favour you. However, consumers are not only consumers in the sense that they are the targets of which companies strive to influence. Consumers are also producers. They are active and productive. They produce a common and social place where they share emotions, identities and meaning (Arvidsson 2006). They are co-producers of the value of the products in terms of how they are using them (Kotler 2009). Sassatelli (2007) further discusses the different roles of consumers describing the dichotomies of production versus consumption, rational versus
irrational, freedom versus oppression, and that consumption cannot be reduced to one of them. Consumers’ subjective perception of a brand has great impact on the development of brand equity, which is further described in the discussion of the brand equity concept (p. 13). Consumers are furthermore influencers. By being co-producers of brand equity, they also influence others subjective perceptions of brands. With all the marketing that we have today and the consumers trying to shut it out, marketers face a difficult challenge in breaking through (Morgan 2011). Alternative ways of making the messages come through may be by buzz marketing and word of mouth. Companies start a so-called buzz with their marketing by creating attention with something fascinating and entertaining, which then consumers talk about to each other (Hughes 2005). This is seen as an effective marketing approach as the conversation is not paid, the consumers are satisfied or not satisfied to a certain level of which they want to share it with others (Hughes 2005).

Consumers are powerful. They have the power to choose your products or not, to determine the production to some extent, and to influence others. They are with other words highly important to influence so they act in a way that is favourable for the company. The traditional marketing ways of for example advertising are generating less results (Morgan 2011; Smilansky 2009). At the same time, what the consumers are searching for has changed. There is a trend of consumers wanting an experience, they want to be engage in the brands, they want a story (Smilansky 2009). With an event you create an opportunity to provide an unforgettable experience, and through that experience you tell the story of the brand, build on relationships, awareness, associations and so on, and in all these aspects the consumer is a part of it. You engage consumers in the experience and through that build and develop brand equity. Thereby the PR events may be an optional way of influencing the consumers to use their power in a way that is favourable for you. In this thesis the different roles of consumers, which are mentioned above, is taken into consideration. They buy and use products, they behave and make sense of what they do based on themselves as individuals and by social and cultural influences, as well as they are also producers and influencers.

2.3 Brands

In contrast to the consumer perspective on PR events, the variable brands in the unit of analysis model (figure 2, p. 8) represents the company perspective. On a basic level, the definition offered by Kendall (2009, p. 371) is applicable; “a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies and distinguishes a seller’s goods or services from those of other sellers”. However, this is only the top of the iceberg, of which it is a tool for mediating value (Arvidsson 2006). As described above, a brand is a social tool for consumers where they may express their identity or fit in socially in a group for example. Continuing with this example, brands are resources of production as they may be employed to produce an identity or social relations. For companies on the other hand a brand is a strategic tool to make consumers into customers. Brands are here resources of appropriation as they capture the productivity of consumers and turn it into a business. In addition to the simplified definition of Kendall (2009) the description by Arvidsson (2006, p. 13) may be added; “brands are in themselves immaterial, informational objects”. Hereby, brands add an immaterial and informational value to products of which consumers and companies derive value from in different ways. While consumers intentions may differ depending on various aspects, brands have a more simplistic goal; to generate revenues and be profitable (Kotler 2009). PR events constitute thereby an activity of conveying the immaterial and informational aspects of the brand to consumers. They, as mentioned, provide an experience and through that experience they tell the story of the brand, build on relationships, awareness, associations and so on. In short they build brand equity. In this thesis the variable brand is referred to brands, and people
representing brands, which possess immaterial value and have the objective to turn that into monetary value.

2.4 Brand equity

The elusive concept brand equity is described by Kendall (2009, p. 16) as “the power of brands”, which is a highly simplistic explanation. Many authors distinguish between different perspectives of brand equity; consumer based and financial based brand equity (Buil, de Chernatony & Martinez 2013; Chieng & Lee 2011; Valette-Florence, Guizani & Merunka 2011; Yoo, Donthu & Lee 2000). These two differ as the financial perspective focuses on the financial value of the brand, that is the money it brings or could bring in, and the consumer based perspective considers the consumers response to a brand. Other, less mentioned perspectives are the company based brand equity (Keller & Lehmann 2006) and the perspective of the trade (Farquhar 1989). The first is closely related to the financial based perspective, as it is the additional value a brand generates to the company; “the additional value...that accrues to a firm because of the presence of a brand name that would not accrue to an equivalent unbranded product” (Keller & Lehmann 2006, p. 745). The latter emphasizes the brand leverage that comes with a brand, which generate greater acceptance and wider distribution of strong brands as well as protection against smaller brands (Farquhar 1989).

Aaker (1991, p. 4), an important contributor to the research of brand equity, defines the concept as “a set of assets such as name awareness, loyal customers, perceived quality, and associations that are linked to the brand (its name or symbol) and add (or subtract) value to the product or service being offered”. Later Keller (1993, p. 17) emphasizes the differential effect of brand equity, defining it as “the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand” where brand knowledge is composed by brand awareness and brand image. Srivastava and Shocker (1991) define it by consisting of two components; brand strength (consumer based) and brand value (financial based). Kendalls (2009, p. 371) definition is somewhat more inclusive; “what consumers know and think about a particular brand and how well that awareness influences them to seek out and use the brand” where he further explains it partly as the consumers’ subjective perception of the brand, which is based on their experiences of it, and partly as the brands promise to consumers. Theories of the dimensions of brand equity are distinctive yet comprise similarities. The dimensions stated by Aaker (1991); brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty are frequently used (Buil, de Chernatony & Martinez 2013; Sasmita & Mohd Suki 2015; Valette-Florence, Guizani & Merunka 2011; Yoo, Donthu & Lee 2000). Other dimensions discussed are brand knowledge (Keller 1993) and social value (Valette-Florence, Guizani & Merunka 2011), as well as brand image (Sasmita & Mohd Suki 2015).

Based on a literature review of the brand equity concept, Chieng and Lee (2011) argument that it cannot be built in short term, but only long term. However, as for example Dospinescu (2014) investigates the impact of one single event during a limited time on brand equity, there are opponents to that argument. A study carried out by Valette-Florence, Guizani and Merunka (2011) investigating the relative impact of a long-term brand management instrument and a short term marketing mix element on brand equity, suggests that brand equity may be created and developed both short term and long term. Naturally the time aspects are relative, however as researchers see effects from both short term and long term elements there is proof for both sides to some extent.
Reviewing the extensive literature on the brand equity concept, some similarities of its characteristics were found. (1) The first and most prominent agreement is the accepted theory of brand equity as an added value. Basically brand equity is the added value to a product that comes with a brand (Chieng & Lee 2011; Yoo, Donthu & Lee 2000). Regardless of whether the value is for the consumer or the company, or if it is strictly defined in monetary terms, the value is an extension from the product itself. (2) The second shared idea is the active role of consumers in building brand equity. Even though this is valid to different extent, such as if focus is on the consumer based brand equity or other perspectives of brand equity, it is an accepted theory. (3) Brand equity includes intangible and tangible values. Intangible values may be the awareness from a consumer and tangible values may be the revenues. (4) The final agreement is that brand equity may generate positive and negative effects. The core of brand equity, and the reason to its importance, is that when it is managed well it can bring great benefit to the company such as increased sales. Though, when for example consumers develop negative associations to the brand, the company may suffer from it.

As this thesis has an open approach to the investigation of the PR event phenomenon, the decision was made to accept both the financial and consumer based perspectives, as well as the four characteristics of brand equity described above. Thereby the definition is not narrowed to include one specific perspective of brand equity, but instead all perspectives are considered in this thesis. Furthermore, the four dimensions of brand equity, developed by Aaker (1991) and acknowledged in a literature review of the concept by Chieng and Lee (2011), are accepted in this thesis. Thereby, the four dimensions of brand equity and the four characteristics constitute the accepted definition that is referred to in this thesis. Finally, both the short term and long term affects are considered. In the following these dimensions are explained in more detail.

Figure 2. A framework for measuring consumer based brand equity (Chieng & Lee 2011)
Figure 2 describes the brand equity concept and the dimensions of brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty. The figure is developed by Chieng and Lee (2011) and is the result from a literature review where the conclusion is made that the model by Aaker (1991) remains the most relevant one. Brand awareness includes brand recognition, brand recall, top of mind, brand dominance, brand knowledge and brand opinion. Brand knowledge is described as “the full set of brand associations linked to the brand” (Chieng & Lee 2011, p. 36). Brand associations “consist of all brand-related thoughts, feelings, perceptions, images, experiences, beliefs, attitudes and is anything linked in memory to a brand” and includes two different types (Chieng & Lee 2011, p. 36). The first type, product associations, includes functional/tangible and non-functional/intangible attributes, such as that a raincoat keeps you dry and that you feel socially accepted in it. The non-functional product attributes are further identified as comprising social image, trustworthiness, perceived value, differentiation and country of origin. The perceived value is referring to what you give for what you get, and the country of origin is related to where the brand is perceived to belong. The second type, organizational associations, includes corporate ability associations and corporate social responsibility (CSR). The first relates to companies’ ability to produce and deliver their products, and the latter is the responsibility companies have to society. Perceived quality is consumers’ subjective thought of the overall quality of the product, including intrinsic and extrinsic attributes (Chieng & Lee 2011). With other words physical attributes, such as the colour or material of a pair of jeans, and non-physical attributes such as the name of the brand or price of the jeans. Brand loyalty is defined by frequency of re-purchase, top of mind and price premium (Chieng & Lee 2011). It is further explained as the consumers’ attachment to a brand. Price premium is the price that a consumer is willing to pay for the brand compared to other brands that have similar benefits.
3 Methodology

In the following the methodology of the thesis is presented, which addresses how the purpose will be fulfilled and the research questions answered. The research approach, design of research and research process are defined and explained. Limitations, ethical concerns and the quality of the study are addressed.

3.1 Research strategy

The existing literature regarding the impact of PR on brand equity is highly focused on the quantitative research method (see table 1, p. 7). The overall purpose of the study speaks for a qualitative method, as it is to understand and interpret the phenomenon of PR events instead of describing, explaining and predicting, which is more related to quantitative research (Cooper & Schindler 2011). Furthermore, quantitative research is among others characterised by the focus on numbers, quantification, the point of the researcher and artificial settings (Bryman 2012). These characteristics do not fit into this thesis, which makes it even more relevant to use a qualitative method. Thus, the decision to do so was made. The purpose is to contribute with an increased understanding of PR events, by an open approach. This approach includes the consideration of different perspectives on the matter. As it is taken into account that meaning is observer dependent, and focus is on how individuals perceive and make sense of the social reality as they do this subjectively, the thesis has the ontological view of constructionism (Bryman & Bell 2013). There is an assumption of that there are multiple realities and thus, focusing on words and the meaning of them instead of numbers and quantification is relevant. Consequently, the emphasis on the point of view of the participants instead of the researcher is of high interest. Finally the aspect of investigating PR events involving a contextual understanding in a natural setting makes it irrelevant to strive to manipulate the settings.

The main criticism of qualitative research is the issue of subjectivity; error and bias in data collection and interpretation, difficulty in demonstrating that the statements are true, lack of transparency and further the difficulty to replicate, which furthermore makes the findings difficult to generalise (Bryman 2012; Cooper & Schindler 2011; Denzin & Lincoln 2000). On the other hand, the criticism of quantitative research may speak for the strive to conquer these obstacles; “criticisms tend to revolve around the view that a natural science model is inappropriate for studying the social world” (Bryman 2012, p. 181).

A common way of distinguishing different types of research is by the view of the relationship between theory and research. Research may be guided by the logical reasoning of induction, deduction, abduction or grounded theory, which all have its own view on what the starting point is and what the result is. It is difficult to allocate a specific logical reasoning to this thesis due to that it does not fit completely into one specific approach, but share some characteristics with all. Having a conceptual framework that allows the theory to guide the research to some extent share some similarities with the deductive approach, as existing theories are the starting point in this method. However, theory constitutes the main role in the deductive approach and it often includes the generation of a hypothesis, which is then tested (Bryman 2012; Cooper & Schindler 2011; Denzin & Lincoln 2000). As existing theory plays a minor role in this thesis and no hypothesis is used, the deductive approach is not appropriate. The purpose of this study to contribute with an increased understanding for PR events allows the research to generate theory, which is similar to the inductive approach (Bryman 2012; Cooper & Schindler 2011; Denzin & Lincoln 2000). At the same time the
generalizability, which is a part of the inductive research, makes the approach not suitable as generalisations based on the findings will not be made in this thesis (Bryman 2012). Grounded theory may be a closer fit as the use of both theory and research generates the findings (the theory), but as it often includes collecting and analysing data more than one time, this approach is not either appropriate for this thesis (Denzin & Lincoln 2000). The ontological view of constructionism in this study brings focus to the perspective of the participant in a social setting, and thereby forms similarities with the abductive approach. The abductive approach is strongly related to induction, with the exception of that the generated theory is based on the perspectives of participants in social settings (Bryman 2012). Even though the thesis does not have the purpose to draw generalisations (considering that this approach share this aspect with induction), the purpose of contributing with an increased understanding of PR events, with an open approach, makes this logical reasoning the most suitable one.

Focusing on the phenomenon of PR events, it is reasonable to utilize the research strategy of a case study, as its purpose is to understand specific cases. “Case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied” (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, p. 435). Yin (2014, p. 13) builds further on to this argument as he defines case studies as “an empirical enquiry within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”. By this definition the method is appropriate when there is a need to understand a more of a contextual based phenomena, as the phenomenon is not separated from but investigated in its context. Dul and Hak (2008, p. 4) answer to the definition stated by Yin (2014) by calling it an all-inclusive descriptive definition and argue that the definition ought to be “one case (single case study) or a small number of cases (comparative case study) in their real life context are selected, and scores obtained from these cases are analysed in a qualitative manner”. The argument of the single use of a qualitative analysis method is in contrast to Yin (2014) who speaks for the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods. What they do have in common is that case studies include the investigation of one or several cases and that the instances are examined in their real life context. The context is with other words not manipulated. The focus of the phenomenon of PR events, and the aim to examine it in its real life context, makes the case study methodology favourable.

According to Yin (2014) there are three conditions that roughly distinguish different research strategies; the form of research question, the extent of how much control of behavioural events the researcher has, and whether it is contemporary or historical events that are investigated. In that way, a case study is preferable as one of the research questions (p. 8) includes the question of how, the investigated event is of contemporary character in contrast to historical events and there is no requirement of controlling the events because they are examined in the real life context (Yin 2014).

An advantage of case studies is that they allow dealing with data from different collection methods, such as interviews and observations, to provide a complete story and it opens up for a holistic and comprehensive view and in depth investigation (Cooper & Schindler 2011; Patton 2002; Yin 2014). As with the qualitative research method, a common criticism against case studies is the issue of generalization (Bryman 2012; Dul & Hak 2008; Yin 2014). “How can a single case possibly be representative so that it might yield findings that can be applied more generally to other cases?” (Bryman 2012, p. 69). Yin (2014, p. 10) answers to this reasoning that it is difficult to generalize the findings from one case but that “case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or
“universes”. Further Dul and Hak (2008) argue that generalizability is not about the study in itself but of the theory, which is achieved by replications. Other criticisms are the lack of rigor that increase the risk of influencing the findings and that you cannot really prove anything, but by following a systematic procedure and showing transparency it may be avoided (Dul & Hak 2008; Yin 2014).

As the research questions have different characteristics, both descriptive and explorative research approaches are utilized. The first research question, “what are the fundamental aspects of PR events in the fashion industry”, includes descriptive research. The purpose of descriptive research is to describe something or someone, which is in this case the phenomenon of PR events (Cooper & Schindler 2011; Dulock 1993). In the strive to describe, the method often includes to answer the questions of what, who, how, when and where (Cooper & Schindler 2011). The characteristics includes that there is no goal of determining a casual relationship, no control or manipulation of the examination object, usually no stated hypothesis, the observation of the current status of the object in its natural setting, and the selection of subjects that have the characteristics that is focused on in the study (Dulock 1993). Similarly to qualitative research and case studies, the limitation of this method includes the lack of generalizability as well as the potential for multiple interpretations of the data (Dulock 1993).

The second research question, “how do PR events contribute to brand equity in the fashion industry”, includes explorative research. “The area of investigation may be so new or so vague that a researcher needs to do an exploration just to learn something new about the dilemma facing the manager. Important variables may not be known or thoroughly defined” (Cooper & Schindler 2011, p. 146). By the literature, it was found that little has been written about PR events as well as about their contribution to brand equity. The focus on a specific industry and/or product category is even less existing. The purpose of contributing with an increased understanding of PR events in the fashion industry, by an open approach, takes this into consideration and calls out for exploring and discovering the topic. The characteristics of the explorative method include limited existing knowledge about the phenomenon, a loose structure, lack of hypotheses of the topic and the objective to discover future research tasks such as developing concepts/definitions or establishing priorities (Cooper & Schindler 2011; Patton 2002). It is useful when there is no clear idea of what the problem is, and it is possible to draw the conclusion that there is no problem (Cooper & Schindler 2011). As with the other research methods the critic of subjectivity, non-representativeness and non-systematic design is also valid in this case, however strictness and integrity of the researcher minimize the risks of it (Cooper & Schindler 2011; Patton 2002).

The purpose of this study includes descriptive and exploratory characteristics. Even though it does not contain explanatory characteristics, there is an overall supposition of a casual relationship in the sense that PR events contribute to brand equity. The casual relationship is concerned with the second research question (p. 8). The casual relationship is assumed due to that it is indicated by the research question, and in order to answer the question the assumption has to be made. With the ontological view of constructionism, the open approach to include different perspectives on the topic, and the investigation of the phenomenon in general and not a specific PR event case, conclusions may be questionable. As discussed, with the chosen research method it is difficult to prove anything and to make generalizations. Referring to Yin (2014), the findings are only generalizable to theoretical propositions. The casual relationship may facilitate the justifications of the conclusions as chain of events may be discovered.
3.2 Data collection

This thesis is a single case study in the sense that it investigates the single phenomenon of PR events. However, as the study contains multiple sources of evidence relating to different PR events, it is thereby a multiple case study. The use of several empirical sources makes the findings more compelling, although it may be a challenge to collect and analyse multiple sources as it may take require considerable resources and time (Yin 2014). The data is collected partly from observations at a PR agency, and partly from interviews with five participants. The observations provide data mainly for the first research question. The reason for this is explained in greater detail in this section. The process of the sampling and the two data collection methods are further described in the following.

3.2.1 Sampling

The selection of participants for the interviews entails purposive sampling, in the sense that they were chosen after that they are relevant in order to provide answers for the research questions (Bryman 2012). As this study investigates the activity of PR events, the first and most crucial sampling criteria is that the participants have experiences from such events. With the ontological view of constructionism different perspectives are of interest, aiming to cover different roles to and ways of working with PR events. In accordance with the unit of analysis figure (figure 2, p. 8), both the view of the company and the consumer is considered. As companies may work with PR events in various ways, three different company perspectives were chosen; a brand, a PR agency and a PR professional. In that way both the starting point (brand) and the execution process (brand, PR agency and PR professional) is considered. The difference between the PR agency and the PR professional is that while the PR agency acts on behalf of its clients, the PR professional has worked with PR events in different ways (he has organized his own events, contracted them to others and has himself been contracted to organize events for others). Also, a blogger and a consumer were chosen in order to gain the perspective from the consumer side. Bloggers and their role as ambassadors are common in the fashion industry of today. Bloggers may work in different ways, but the common situation is when they get paid (financially and/or with products) to market the brand and its products. With the business deal of marketing a product with the voice of a consumer to other consumers, along with their actions as a consumer, they are something in between the company and consumer roles/perspectives. In order to capture this contrast of having the role of a consumer and/or a business partner, a person who works with a blog full time was identified and chosen.

Relating to the first sampling criteria the brand, PR agency and PR professional were required to host PR events, and the blogger and consumer were required to visit them. The delimitation to the Danish fashion industry required the sampling criteria of that the participants are active in Denmark. The focus on the seasonal fashion industry constitutes the final sampling criteria. In accordance to that a brand that belongs to this industry, a PR agency and PR professional that represents those brands, and a blogger and consumer that visits events hosted by those brands were chosen. The participants are the following;

- Brand working with PR events in-house
- PR agency working with PR events on the behalf of brands
- PR professional working with PR events on the behalf of brands
- Full time blogger visiting PR events
- Consumer visiting PR events
The choice of company to exert participant observations at was founded on the same criteria as for the sampling of interview participants. The PR agency, which is the investigation object for the observations, is a Danish company active in Denmark who is among others hosting PR events for their clients, which are categorized as seasonal fashion brands. As the selection of investigation objects is based on certain criteria and the strive to include a wide variation of perspectives and roles related to the investigated phenomenon, the purposive sampling includes characteristics of both criterion sampling and maximum variation sampling (Bryman 2012).

3.2.2 Participant observations

During a period of five months I had an internship at a Danish PR agency, working within fashion and beauty. By working as a Fashion Assistant I gained access to their workplace (including PR events), which were closed, non-public settings that I would not have gained access to otherwise. I also got be a part of their day-to-day work. Participant observation is often confused with ethnography and with the many common features it is not surprisingly. They both share the research methods of involving oneself in a social setting for an extended time period, observing behaviour, listen to conversations between others as well as engaging in them, carry out interviews and study documents (Bryman 2012). What differs between the two concepts is that ethnography further includes the examination focus on cultures and that it is both a method and the written outcome of the research, compared to participant observations which is more of a data collection method (Yin 2014).

The internship took place at the head office and at the PR events the PR agency hosted. Thereby, I was able to collect data from PR events in real life and in their context. The extent of participation and observation differed as the involvement varied over time and from situation to situation. For example I had sometimes more time to observe and perhaps talk to the guests at the events, and sometimes I was too busy. As Patton (2002) discusses, it is not a simple matter when you decide what role you will have as it may change over time as the researcher finds the role in the meantime of the data collection. At the beginning of the internship, I was for example uncertain of whether I would be able to talk to the guests and in that case to which extent. The employees at the PR agency were aware of the research project and the data collection. However, as it was not openly acknowledged to anyone else, such as visitors to the showroom or the events, it made me take on a covert role as a researcher to a greater extent than a overt role (Bryman 2012). If someone was inquisitive, I acknowledged that I was a researcher. Thereby there was no threat of covering my identity, and conversations could be steered towards the research topic. The issue of reactivity and reflexivity was decreased, as people outside the company did not know that they were being observed (Bryman 2012; Yin 2014). At the same time it generated ethical issues as they were not offered an opportunity to choose to take part in the research, and there was a risk of deception (Bryman 2012; Cooper & Schindler 2011; Patton 2002). As I was working at the PR agency I had an active role, but I did not try to influence the happenings. Thereby bias due to investigators manipulation of events was reduced (Yin 2014).

The participant observations were conducted in order to collect data mainly for the first research question, “what are the fundamental aspects of PR events in the fashion industry”. The reason is that the observations are more suitable to answer questions with descriptive rather than explorative characteristics. The second research question, “how do PR events contribute to brand equity in the fashion industry”, includes a casual relationship, which may be difficult to investigate by observations. Even though the observations include participation, it is only to a limited extent. Therefore, the interviews contribute to a greater extent to the
investigation of the casual relationship assumed in the second research question, than the observations do.

With the purpose of contributing with an increased understanding of PR events, by an open approach, the observations included everything that could be linked to it. No specific guidelines of what to look after were used. The observations occurred during five months, four days a week, during office hours at the head office and at the PR events. My work as a Fashion Assistant included various work assignments of which not everyone were PR event related. With regard to the extensive time period and that everything was not interesting for fulfilling the purpose of the thesis, field notes were not taken on a regular basis. Instead notes were written whenever something of interest for the thesis occurred, in this case things related to the fundamental aspects of PR events. As it is sometimes inappropriate to be seen taking notes at work, brief descriptive notes were taken when the chance was given, to not forget anything. Later, when the working day was over, more inclusive reflective notes were written.

3.2.3 Semi structured interviews

“The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit. We interview to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind, to gather their stories.” (Patton 2002, p. 341).

In addition to the participant observations, interviews were used in order to collect more comprehensive evidence. With the purpose of contributing with an increased understanding of PR events, by an open approach, along with the ontological view of constructionism, the strive was to focus on the participants’ perspectives and let them elaborate on their answers. At the same time it is important to keep focus on collecting the right data in order to answer the research questions and fulfil the purpose of the thesis. Thus, semi structured interviews were used as they focus directly on the investigated topic at the same time as they are flexible and insightful (Bryman 2012; Cooper & Schindler 2011; Yin 2014). “The quality of the information obtained during an interview is largely dependent on the interviewer” (Patton 2002, p. 341). The researchers actions are crucial in order to collect valuable data (Bryman 2012; Cooper & Schindler 2011; Yin 2014), but some responsibility also lays on the participant to answer truthfully and not just what they think the researcher want to hear (Yin 2014).

In accordance with being open yet keeping focused on the purpose, an interview guide was used. The interview guide includes specific topics to be covered, which are set out in a specific order of which they are to be addressed. (1) First information about the participant is collected, in order to have the possibility to contextualize the answers. (2) Secondly the fundamental aspects of PR events are discussed. This includes questions regarding characteristics of PR events; what, who, why, when and where, which were identified by Cooper and Schindler (2011) as common questions to answer descriptive research. It also includes the subtopic of experiences of events, which further includes questions regarding what happens before, during and after PR events. (3) Finally, the contribution of PR events to brand equity is investigated. Here the subtopics are constructed according to brand equity dimensions, which are based on the conceptual framework of brand equity explained in the conceptual framework chapter, and the evaluation of the contribution along with the participants’ personal thoughts on PR events. With a comparative analysis approach, this format was used for all participants. However, due to the separation of the company and
consumer perspectives, two separate interview guides were used where the questions are adjusted to reflect this. The interview guides are available in appendix 2.

Open questions were used as the participants then have the opportunity to answer however they want, without influence from the researcher (Bryman 2012; Patton 2002). In the same way leading questions were avoided. Having the assumption of a casual relationship it was kept in mind to make room for explanations of casual relationships. The comparative analysis approach is also considered, making room for comparisons of different events and their effects. In terms of ethical considerations, both informed consent and the right to privacy were considered (Bryman 2012; Cooper & Schindler 2011; Denzin & Lincoln 2000). The participants took part in the interviews by their own consent and they were informed prior to the interview what the research is about as well as the purpose of it. The decision was also made to keep the participants anonymous, which they were informed of, in order to increase the truth and validity of the answers. Four interviews took place face-to-face and one via Skype. This was due to that the person did not have the opportunity to have the interview in person. Notes after the interviews were made including how it went, where it took place, and other aspects of interest. The interviews are recorded and transcribed.

3.3 Reporting and analysis

In order to carry out an analysis of good quality, a defined general analytic strategy is advantageous where the priorities for what to analyse as well as why and how are given (Yin 2014). The general analysis strategy of this thesis is to continue in accordance with the theoretical propositions that led to the study. Based on the existing theories, the research questions are defined, which further shape the data collection and analysis, as well as guide the prioritizing. The gap in the literature of PR events in general lead to the question of what the fundamental aspects of it is. The gap of the activity of PR events in relation to brand equity, as well as a specific industry and product category, lead to the examination of this. The literature review of the brand equity concept resulted in a conceptual framework (figure 2, p. 14), which along with the other theories in the conceptual framework chapter lead to the interview guide and analysis model, and thus guide the data collection and analysis process. At the same time, the analysis is empirically driven. With the purpose of contributing with an increased understanding of PR events, by an open approach, the point of view of the participants is in focus and their individual subjective realities are considered. The findings from the observations and the interviews thus guide the analysis to some extent. The lack of theoretical propositions of the fundamental aspects of PR events, led to that the participant observations are reported according to discovered essential themes. What was found to have most significant value in relation to the research questions is presented in a section separated from the interviews in the results, and further analysed together with the interviews in the analysis.

The type of structure of reporting and analysing the evidence has a comparative approach. “A comparative structure repeats the same case study two or more times, comparing alternative descriptions or explanations of the same case...the same case can be described repeatedly, from different points of view” (Yin 2014, p. 153). The same case is in this instance the phenomenon of PR events; the fundamental aspects of it and its contributions to brand equity. This same case is investigated partially in participant observations and partially in interviews with five different participants having different roles to and perspectives of the case. Each investigation object contributes with a unique point of view, which thus makes it interesting to do a comparison in order to see differences and similarities to further build an overall perception of the case. A cross-case synthesis analysis method is used. Following the
characteristics of a comparative approach, this method includes pattern matching using word tables where the overall pattern lead to conclusions (Yin 2014). Each individual evidence source is treated as a separate one including the development of individual word tables. These are then compared and contrasted to each other. The name of the method, cross-case synthesis, indicates the use of multiple cases. Even though the study investigates the single phenomenon of PR events, which may then be interpreted as a single case study, this thesis is a multiple case study as it contains multiple sources of evidence relating to PR events.

Regarding the interviews, the execution of a comparison may be questionable as the participants were chosen after having as separate perspectives as possible. However, with the ontological view of constructionism, it is acknowledged that there are multiple realities of which meaning is observer dependent. Having an open mind for that individuals perceive and make sense of their social reality subjectively may contribute to fulfilling the purpose of the study, as it is to contribute with an increased understanding of PR events, by an open approach. Due to the variance of perspectives, the findings from the comparison may also be questionable. However, understanding the separate individual cases before combining them and carrying out pattern matching in search for comparisons and contrasts, supports the verification of that they are grounded in the cases and their contexts (Patton 2002). Another issue is the significance of the discovered patterns, or lack of it. In order to increase the substantive significance, researchers have to rely on their intelligence, experience and judgement, take the participants responses seriously, and consider the reactions of those who read the results. Further researchers may reflect over “how solid, coherent and consistent is the evidence…to what extent and in what ways do the findings increase and deepen understanding of the phenomenon studied…to what extent are the findings consistent with other knowledge…to what extent are the findings useful for some intended purpose” (Patton 2002, p. 467). At the same time, the gap in the literature that lead to the purpose of this thesis, may open for the findings to have discovery and innovative significance.

Based on the general analysis strategy of following the theoretical propositions that led to the case study, along with the comparative approach, specific topics to be covered was defined in order to collect relevant data. By applying these topics to the unit of analysis figure (figure 1, p. 8), which includes the main factors to be analysed, an analysis model (figure 3) for this thesis was developed. The analysis model is divided into two parts reflecting the two research questions. The first part “PR events” reflects the first research question of “what are the fundamental aspects of PR events in the fashion industry” and includes the subtopics characteristics and experiences of events. The second part “PR events and brand equity” reflects the second research question of “how do PR events contribute to brand equity in the fashion industry” and includes the subtopics brand equity dimensions, evaluation of contribution and personal thoughts on PR events. The brand and consumer concepts are coloured grey, as they represent the main perspectives to be considered rather than topics in the interview guide.
3.4 Quality of the study

Yin (2014) argues when it comes to case studies, the quality of the study is usually tested by four criteria; construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability.

3.4.1 Construct validity

Construct validity is achieved when the correct measures are used for the studied concept, involving the selection of what will be studied and that the measures reflects that (Yin 2014). For example if you want to study fashion trend changes in a shop you may decide to investigate the preference for the colour blue and measure it by sales numbers. The studied concepts in this thesis are PR events and brand equity. Regarding the first research question (p. 8), it is difficult to determine whether the measurements reflect what is investigated as the question has descriptive characteristics. The choice of measures regarding the second research question (p. 8), which includes the assumption of a casual relationship, is based to some extent on a literature review, which increases the construct validity. The challenge to achieve construct validity when writing a thesis often emerges in the process of data collection and composition, and may be avoided by having multiple sources and chain of evidence (Yin 2014). Multiple empirical sources, including observations and interviews with participants having different perspectives on the matter, are used. Efforts of showing links from the problematization to research questions, review of theory, data collection, analysis and conclusions have been made. Furthermore, efforts were made to make room for explanations of casual relationships during the interviews.

3.4.2 Internal validity

Internal validity is related to casual relationships and making inferences in a study, and to what extent these may be validated (Yin 2014). If an assumption is made that a certain activity leads to a specific effect, internal validity is not achieved when another activity caused the effect. There are various ways to assure internal validity during the data analysis; pattern matching, explanation building, addressing rival explanations, and the use of logic models (Yin 2014). Pattern matching is described as when a pattern based on empirical evidence is matched with a predicted one. In this case, the criterion is most relevant to the second research question (p. 8) as there is an assumption of a casual relationship of that PR events contributes to brand equity. As this pattern was found to be mainly accepted by the participants, it increases the internal validity. The analysis of the results includes comparing
and contrasting the different evidence sources. Thereby, another kind of pattern matching is performed, which also opens up for the consideration of rival explanations. The efforts to make room for explanations of causal relationships during the interviews open up for explanation building and identifying chains of events.

3.4.3 External validity

External validity is the extent to which the findings of a study may be generalized (Bryman 2012; Cooper & Schindler 2011; Yin 2014). Continuing with the example of fashion trend changes, if only one brand in one shop was investigated, it may be questionable if it is possible to generalize the findings of that brands trend changes to another shop. As mentioned, generalizability is one of the greatest criticisms towards qualitative research and case studies. In the situation of multiple case studies, one way to deal with this is the use of replication logic (Yin 2014). This is used by collecting data from both observations and interviews, as well as from different individuals with different roles and relations to the examined phenomenon. The same questions are asked to several sources. The purpose of this thesis is not to generalize the findings. It is difficult to draw generalised conclusions as the evidence sources are few and may not represent a bigger population. The great variation in the findings is not making it any easier. However, as Yin (2014) discusses, the findings may be generalizable to the theoretical propositions of the sources. Regarding external validity in specifically descriptive research it is important that the right data is collected from the right subject in the right setting (Dulock 1993). Findings to the first research question (p. 8), which have descriptive research characteristics, are collected from both observations and interviews. The observations are carried out at a PR agency that works with among others PR events. The PR agency is a valid source as the employees working there are professionals in this area. The PR agency is hired by its clients to work with their PR. The clients (the starting point of the events), the PR agency (the executer), and the attending guests are all available for observations. The fact that observations are also carried out during that events takes place live increases the validity. The interviews are collected from participants that answer to specific criteria, which further increases the external validity in descriptive research.

3.4.4 Reliability

Finally, reliability addresses the matter of whether the study may be repeated, and if it with the same procedures gives the same results (Bryman 2012; Cooper & Schindler 2011; Yin 2014). The challenge is in the data collection and analysis process and may be avoided by the use of a case study protocol and the development of a case study database. Efforts were made to clearly show what is done and why. The strive for being transparent in the procedures of the data collection, how it was collected, what was asked and how it was reported, is visible in the methodology chapter as well as in the documentation of the data and the reporting of it. The complete field notes from the observations and the transcriptions from the interviews are available in appendix 1 and appendix 3.
4 Results

In the following the results from each evidence source are presented individually, starting with the participant observations and continuing with the interviews. The participant observations are presented according to discovered essential themes. The interviews are presented in accordance with the topics in the interview guide. Finally a word table is developed to summarise the results from all the interviews and offer an overview of the findings.

4.1 Observations at a PR agency

4.1.1 The purpose of PR events

All events that are hosted by the PR agency have a purpose and/or a special reason for why they are used. Usually the brands (the clients of the agency) have separate events where the event is only for one brand. For example some events are hosted to celebrate the release of a new collection or collaborations. One brand uses the event to celebrate the release of their very first shoe collection, in addition to their usual bag collections. Another brand has an event when the designer comes to Copenhagen to meet and greet the fans in relation to the release of their very first collection.

As an exception, several brands have a united press day event where they are presented side by side. At this event the press, stylists, bloggers and influencers are invited to the showroom at the agency to see the new collections for the next season. The purpose for the brands here is partly to show what they have and get attention from the press, and partly to get feedback from the press about their collection. The collection itself may not be changed, but the presentation of the collection may be optimized. The reason of why the brands are having their events is in most cases clear to the attending guests as they are given a presentation of the reason prior to and at the event. In exception, a presentation may not be offered at the event, although information about the reason for the event is given in the invitation.

4.1.2 Every detail matters

During the event, every little detail matters. It is very important that everything is perfect, that there is enough of food and drinks, that there are fresh flowers, all the clothes are ironed, the hangers have equal space in between, all the buttons are done et cetera. The placement of the products is a highly important aspect, as they should be placed in a way that makes them photograph friendly. The arrangements include both bigger aspects, such as the products, as well as minor details such as the toilet paper. If the toilet paper is not white and soft enough, it is not approved and has to be replaced with a better alternative. In order for the event to be as it is wished, the preparations are extensive.

4.1.3 The importance of the guests

The guests is a highly discussed topic prior, during and after the events. The question of who should be invited takes a long time to determine. Then the process of inviting them usually includes several steps; send out “save the date”, send out the proper invitation, getting response from the invited person (RSVP), contact them if they have not answered and send out a “we look forward to see you tomorrow” message. These are the most common steps in the process, and usually start one month ahead to the event. The process may start closer such as two days prior the event, although this is not preferable.
Prior to and during events the brand advisors are always a bit nervous of whether the people that have said they would come will actually attend. In each event there is always someone who accepted the invitation that does not shows up. The perceptions and feelings of the guests as well as the general mood and atmosphere are always considered when the brand advisor responsible for the event discusses whether she is happy about an event that has taken place.

4.1.4 After action review
After the events have taken place, an after action review report is made if the brand orders it. This is usually the case. However, brands that have smaller events with for example 15 guests may think that they can see the effect themselves and thereby not order a review. An after action review report includes a strategic review describing what was planned to do, what really happened, what to keep (what worked well), what to stop (what to avoid going forward), and what to start (what can be improved or added). The after action review report also includes pictures from the event taken by a photographer, which is always present at all events. Finally media updates related to the event is presented, including names and followers of the creator of the update. The media that is covered is print magazines, online magazines, blogs, Instagram and Facebook.

4.1.5 Work versus free time
Most events take place during office hours, with the exceptions of the occasional evening events. The issue of having an evening event is discussed as the employees at the agency express that they do not want to take peoples free time. Especially in the case of if it is not a big brand hosting the event. If it is a big brand then it is more ok. Nevertheless, it is explained as preferable to have morning or day events rather than evening events. The issue of free time as opposed to work time also comes up as one of the brand advisors is attending an event in another city and thereby has to spend two evenings and one full workday on that. The client does not want to compensate her for the time that she loose by coming to the event, as they think that it is more of a free time/own interest case than work. At the same time they want her there because of her relations with the guests. The brand advisor also feel the diffuse line between free time and work but feels that she wants some sort of compensation, even though it does not have to be big.

4.1.6 It differs and depends
Same for all aspects of PR events is that it differs a lot and that it depends on the brand and the event. The purpose of having an event may be to celebrate a new collection, collaboration, a designers visit, a new happening et cetera. The amount of guests differs from one to 500 people. Considering having an invitation only or an open for the public event, the type of guests may also differ. It may be only the press, only bloggers, press, bloggers, stylists and influencers, or just anyone who wants to come. The size of the location differs from a 20 square meter room to a big store in a mall. The events may be hosted by a single brand but several brands may also coexist in one single event.

4.2 Interviews
The interviews are presented in accordance with the topics in the interview guide; first the fundamental aspects of PR events (including the subtopics characteristics and experiences of events) and then the contributions of PR events to brand equity (including the subtopics brand equity dimensions, evaluation of contribution and personal thoughts on PR events). The subtopics regarding the contributions of PR events to brand equity are only used as subheadings in the presentation of the interview with participant A. This is due to the extensive
amount of findings in this case, in comparison to the rest of the interviews of which findings are less comprehensive.

4.2.1 Participant A - brand

The first brand perspective is represented by a Danish male working at a Danish fashion brand. He has worked for the brand for six years, and has earlier experience from working at a fashion magazine. As Head of PR and Communication, he takes part in deciding whether to have PR events as well as organizing, executing and evaluating them. In the following the participant is called “A”, and the brand where he works is called “X”.

4.2.1.1 PR events

4.2.1.1.1 Characteristics

Participant A shows a strong reaction and is rather surprised by the question to define PR events; “Wow! I do not have one sort of simple, clean-cut definition. But I can tell you what kind of PR events we have”. Participant A points out that PR is about public relations and further describes that depending on whom you are targeting, such as the press or consumers, the kind of PR event will be defined. “The show is a communication tool. And that is the same for events in general”. The styling of the collection in a show (a fashion show) is important. “It is mainly the creative team, but again I am very much involved because it is also a part of how we communicate the brand, how we stage the brand, how do we ensure that if we have 40 looks going down the runway end consumers at least can buy 30 of those looks”. Events are also described as a “generator for collaboration with relevant partners... for their attention and their desire to use our products or to mention our brand”. This could for example be dressing someone for a TV show, or that they write about the brand. Participant A further discusses “in a way you could say that the event is our patrol for everything we do. Everything else is just a matter of following up and preparing the next event”. A also talks about the message that is conveyed through the event, which they strive to get the attending guests to understand. “At the end of the day the idea is for them to pass on that message. Of course we want the 300 people who are there to really get the message”. The fashion shows are described as their most important events “which is mainly targeted at press and industry influencers or key opinion leaders. But at the end of the day it hopefully trickles down through the bloggers and the press and the buyers, to reach the end consumers”.

Speaking of negative and positive aspects of events participant A argues “I think from my point of view all the events we do make sense. Otherwise we would not do them. So if you look at a cost benefit... of course we invest something but we think we get more back in return”. What is invested is mentioned to be time, passion, energy and money. A describes the positive outcomes as “it is relatively cheap for us to actually make some noise and get people to come and get a bit of attention on Instagram and so on”. “We can also see that it generates so much hype and interest about the brand that if we were to get that amount interest from advertising, we should spend 20 times as much money on advertising as we do now on a show. So you get much more exposure, good will, interest, from that investment than you would from another type of investment when our product is suited for it... of course it is because the products fits the strategy or the type of event that we are doing”. Only offering white t-shirts you would not be suited as a runway brand. Comparing live events with digital, A explains the benefit of personal involvement. “If you want to stage your brand...it is not the same to make a website with beautiful film. The big difference is probably that any type of event, whether it being big or small, you get personal involvement. People are physically there, physically invested somehow. I do not think you could just sort of transform that into an advertising campaign”.

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“I think our industry is becoming more and more and more driven by events and by the need for you know people want to experience something”. Participant A describes that people do not just want to look at the product, but that they want an experience; “how can we turn it into an experience”. The importance of staging the product and the brand in that experience is expressed. A explains that social media plays a big part in this. “It is not a new thing that when you have guests you serve something…but I think what is new is that you start considering everything a photo opportunity and you start arranging your food, flowers, products as a photo opportunity…you stage the food, not so that it tastes good, but so it looks good”. As the brand has recently moved to a new head office, they plan to have a house warming. “Our creative directors do not think we are ready to receive guests yet, they think that we need the new furniture and blahblahblah”. Similarly, A explains “unfortunately every time we have a show I always end up yelling and screaming at someone because if I do not, it is something that is not good enough”.

Participant A explains that everyone uses events, while some are better than others and some invest more money in them. When events are used is a matter of how it fits the brand, “when it is relevant for the brand”. It is important to not use too many. “All these people we are reaching out to, they are constantly being reached out to and being invited to all these kinds of events, and they also get fed up at some point. They are like - for gods sake stop with all the fruits for Instagram just show me the collection -...enough is enough”. A discusses if they would have a press day every week, no one would come. “How many events can I have for the same group of people?”. In terms of why events are used, A points out that the common final goal of events is “selling products to the consumers of course. Any commercially driven company has one goal and that is to sell products, or to make money”. In terms of where, A describes that a lot of brands use their own premises. “A lot of brands spend a lot of resources on having a beautiful showroom”. Otherwise “you want to find something that fits the brand, product, collection, what ever you want to do. You do not want to go to an old jail house if you are promoting something super romantic and girly, unless you have a very conscious contradiction in what you do...you try to find something that supports your brand DNA”.

4.2.1.1.2 Experiences of events
Participant A describes the preparations prior to a fashion show to include certain steps; 1) when 2) where 3) who 4) creative forma. The aspect of when includes date and time, and whether “it make sense in terms of all the activities we have in the company”. The second step is described as a rather more complex and crucial aspect. “One of our biggest issues there is always the venue. Where would we like to be, where is it possible to be, both in terms of budget and practicalities...How many people can we accommodate. Finding the event location is essential and paramount to the actual result and for the rest of the process. Those physical limitations will affect everything else”. The third step regarding who will attend the PR event is a process that takes a lot of time. The guest lists are separated by country and then further by sales, PR and others such as VIP, friends or family. “So we have all these many many guests lists that are being updated and revised and updated again”. The guest list depends on, except from the venue, the guests. “Certain groups or certain guest lists can be very big. We can invite 10 000 people and only ten will come. Other groups of people we can invite ten and they will all come”. The fourth step is the “creative forma” of which in A’s situation is about the production such as model casting, sound, lightning, backstage facilities, catering et cetera. The hair and make up is another aspect of the preparations. For the last four years X has collaborated with two companies, which “create the look for the show”. The
collaboration is explained to “make sense” as they also work with them for the look book. “So you get some consistency from our pictures and our show”.

The invitation process includes sending out invitations and following up on the answers. “We regard ourselves as the Prada of Copenhagen Fashion Week. People coming for Milan Fashion Week, they know when Prada is having the show and they investigate and make sure to reserve that date. We expect that people who are relevant for our show to reserve the date, so we do not send out a save-the-date, we send an invitation”. The invitations are sent out two weeks prior to the show. They are also digitally, based on the budget. “I can either do a beautiful printed invitation, which I also need to spend money on sending, or I can book five extra models. When you are working with the kind of budget that we are, of course you need to prioritise always”. RSVP is a big part of the work that occurs before the event. “If they have not answered of course you are going to stalk them for an RSVP”.

When asked about what happens during the event, participant A is uncertain of the time aspect that is referred to. “The ten minutes of the actual show, that is the ten minutes I do nothing. Because then it is out of my hands”. He further adds “you try to not just have the ten minutes, but try to see which other events lead up to it. How can we maximise it. Instead of just having one event of ten minutes, how can we turn it in to a string of events over maybe several days... you try to extend the string of events”. This is done by for example backstage appointments with press and bloggers, dressing people for the red carpet and front row et cetera. During the event “we try to be so prepared so that there is so little stress as possible... basically that everything in the room where we have the show is done and ready for the guests”.

Speaking of the guest list participant A explains “everyone working within our industry also knows that it will always change. Regardless how well prepared you have been, it will always change”. Invited guests may not show up, uninvited guests may show up and attending guests may be unsatisfied with their seat. The handling of the unforeseen happenings is described to be based on prioritising. “Certain people you will always be able to find a seat, certain people you will always welcome but not to sit, and other people you know it will never happen. You prioritise people like that”. The guests are not the only ones to welcome and to take care of, but also the whole team. “I spend a lot of time nursing everyone and trying to...all these people we work with to make sure that they have a nice day”. A expresses the importance of maintaining a good relationship with them as “we want to make sure everyone is delivering, everyone is working hard. But is it a good atmosphere, people wanna do it again”. He further describes relationships as especially important to them as “it is really part of our brand DNA and identity. We are considered the friendly brand...it is really a big part of how we motivate people”. This is regardless whether the people are employees, paid or not paid and business partners or not. “It is all the people working with you, but also all the people you do the show for at the end of the day. The press, the buyers, the influencers... The networking and the socializing part of it, I mean it is public relations...so it is a huge part of it”. At the same time he stresses that “another part of it is also to be able to be the bitch” and to be able to demand a job well done from people on the pay roll.

4.2.1.2 PR events and brand equity

4.2.1.2.1 Brand equity dimensions

The general affect that brands want with events, and the final goal, is explained as selling products. “I think most brands have recognized the fact that you sell more products if you
have a brand awareness, and you get more brand awareness if you get some kind of exposure”. Regarding social media participant A explains that they consider everyone they work with and the guests “as someone who could spread the word somehow and expose your brand, expose your product, make you top of mind, make you a preferred choice...You put a lot of trust on the fact that people who come for the event have a good experience that they are sharing somehow”. Events are explained to “have great impact on brand awareness”.

When asked about whether PR events have an impact on brand associations, participant A answers “definitely definitely definitely”. “When you stage your product or your brand you try to stage it in a way where you elevate it...If I want ordinary women to wear our brand, I need to show them women that are slightly cooler than themselves wearing it, so that they aspire to become those women...we try to stage the brand slightly out of its comfort zone...you will constantly push it slightly towards something more exclusive or desirable or fascinating”. A further explains that consumers do not shop due to physical needs. “When people buy clothes, they buy emotions. They buy into a dream or into a universe, or into some kind of value, a kind of lifestyle they want to live or aspire to. When we want to convey or communicate our essence and lifestyle and values and the kind of woman you can become by wearing our brand, the show is a great way to articulating and communicating that”. He mentions the different senses that events makes possible for them to use, such as the music. The emotions are a big part of getting the message they want to send to the receivers. Regarding associations to the brand versus the products, A argues “our products is our brand...the story we tell is the product”. “Of course we add on different layers, also when I talk about our attitude and our friendly energy...we add all these things but the core of the brand is the product”. This is described to depend on who you are as a brand. “I think you can have some brands where the product is irrelevant in a way. You sell whatever, but the brand is about the lifestyle...People associate them with so much more than just the product”. A also talks about positioning; “It depends on what kind of event it is, but a runway show specifically it is also a matter of positioning the brand as a runway brand...Any company can make clothes, it is not everyone who can make fashion. And not everyone can make runway fashion”. Perceived quality and brand associations are the most important dimensions, and simultaneously described as difficult to distinguish. “I think you can always try to add on to the perception of the quality of the brand, of the product. And you could always try to add on to the experience of the brand. I think it is very much the same, if people get a positive experience about the brand, they will also be more inclined to elevate their perception of it. I think I have a hard time theoretically distinguishing those two actually”.

“You need to be on your toes constantly...I think people are disloyal and I think it is ok”. Participant A expresses that PR events have no impact on brand loyalty. “Looking at the product, you are only as strong as your latest collection. Looking at the event, you are only as strong as your latest show”. The events are described to create expectations. “I think you can disappoint people once maybe twice, but honestly within our industry you do not get that many chances”. You have fewer chances with someone new to the brand and more chances with someone already knowing the brand. The buyers place orders if they think they can sell it, bloggers “write about what they love. They do not write about what they kind of also think is ok”, and the end consumers “do not buy our brand because they liked it one year ago, they buy it because they like it now”.

Regarding what types of events give what types of effect, participant A expresses that quality events give quality effect, while quantity events give quantity effect. He describes a smaller dinner event where they had eight guests; “you may only have eight guests, so you really hand
pick eight very very high profiled gate keepers or key opinion leaders who you want to brainwash. You want to turn them into little ambassadors who can go and spread the word on your behalf… You focus on a limited amount of guests, but you expect them to then add value to the brand”. Talking about the fashion shows where they maybe have 500 guests, it is on a larger scale where they hope for them to reach out to more people. The amount of money is another aspect giving a certain type of effect. “There is a relation between the excess rate and the money you invest…Like when you get fed up looking at Victoria’s Secret in the news feed for a week… they spend a lot of money but on the other hand they get so much exposure and so much buzz”. A talks about a “more is more game” where “the sky is the limit”, which depends on the budget.

4.2.1.2.2 Evaluation of contribution
Participant A describes that they do not measure the effect of PR events. “It is so tricky anyway to try and quantify the value of media or brand exposure, whether it being print media, social media, word of mouth … Everyone tries to put a number on it or put a value on it but at the end of the day it is really really…like your guess is as good as mine”. At the same time he adds that “the only way it would make sense” would be to see the numbers in relation to each other. “That is where it becomes relevant, if you want to compare one season to another season”.

Even though they do not measure the effect of PR events, they evaluate them in qualitative terms. “We evaluate five minutes after the show in a way internally where we talk about what should we do differently, what worked, what did not work, what did we love and what did we hate, what did not turned out what we expected it to. We also make a proper evaluation, it is just not a quantitative evaluation”. We are referred to participant A, the designers, the creative agency they work with and the CEO. When asked about what is included in their proper evaluation, A answers “everything…we just trust our instinct and our gut feeling and you know, are we pleased. I think it is also because we are ambitious in the sense that we are never happy, we are never content. We can say it is good but we just want to do better”. The proper evaluation includes a conversation where they “sit down and evaluate for two hours every single detail in the process and the result…It is a very organic dialogue, everyone just pinches in, have an opinion, raises their voice. We see it from different perspectives. I am not at the backstage during the show, so I have no personal experience f from that. So it is also who experience what. A describes that they are influenced by reviews from for example print and online media or bloggers. Some critique is considered as they want to learn from their mistakes, and some is not considered. The brand equity dimensions are explained to be “parameters that you can take into consideration. It can make sense to take them into consideration. For our sake it would definitely be again like a gut feeling dialogue about do we feel as if…”. “We all take for granted, for instance when we evaluate the show, it should elevate the brand perception. So it is a pre-condition you could say for the dialogue we have that that is the agenda. So even if we do not use those words or parameters, it is integrated part of the dialogue we have and it could possibly make sense to talk about”.

4.2.1.2.3 Personal thoughts on PR events
“I think it is a very very good type of tool…if you look at our brand, the only thing we do to brand ourselves is the events”. When asked whether they have additional events, except for fashion shows and press days, A answers “rarely. It would be a good idea but it is a matter of resources…”. He continues “it is my personal judgement and decision when we do have all these types of events. So of course I think it is relevant, that it is worth it”. Even with the difficulties to calculate, A is certain that they get more out of it than they put into it. “All I
know for a fact is that if we were to quantify the output it would be bigger than the input. And it would be a lot bigger. So it makes sense”. Although, A points out that there is a limit to how much an event can do. “You cannot make a relevant event and invite 1 million people. So if you want to reach out to huge audiences, then of course you need other tools...if you are a huge brand I do not think you could just market it through events and then expect it generate word of mouth”. He further argues that they do not directly reach out to a huge audience, but through gatekeepers. “We want to reach out to a lot of women, but at the end of the day it still makes sense as have it as word of mouth, to use gatekeepers to spread the word. In that way we are not directly reaching out to the end consumer, we are because we are on Instagram and other channels. But a lot of what we do, we do to reach out through others. And for us it makes sense, because they become our ambassadors”.

4.2.2 Participant B - PR agency

The participant representing the perspective from a PR agency, is a young Danish female working as a Brand Advisor in the fashion department at a Danish PR agency. She has been working there for three years, since she graduated from her bachelor in Communications and Branding at Copenhagen Business School. As a Brand Advisor she works on behalf of the clients (the brands) that the agency has. She plans, organizes, executes and evaluates events to different extent. The PR agency works a lot with influencers rather than the final consumer, and the events are thereby often not open for the public, but for invited guests only. In the following the participant is called “B”.

4.2.2.1 PR events

4.2.2.1.1 Characteristics

When asked to define PR events, participant B starts to mention that it depends. After a while when she has described some PR events that they have had, she answers; “The definition of the PR event is to give the guest a kind of a message from the brand”. The most important thing with why PR events are used is described as to sending a message, and that it is received and understood by the attending guests. “Let them know what you want them to know about the brand or about the new collection or a new launch or anything like that. So the most important thing with hosting a PR event is to make sure that all the guests are going from the event and having an idea about the collection or about the brand or something like that. So it is very important that it is not just a meet and greet kind of event. It is important that the guest gets something out from going there, besides from getting champagne or something”. B mentions various times that PR events are difficult to describe as it is different depending on the event and the brand. “That is the fluffy part of PR events”. At the same time she argues “that is the beauty of having an event, you can do it in so many different ways”.

A positive aspect with PR events is described as the possibility to create a unique kind of mood. “If you want to make something unique kind of mood it is better to host it in an event. You can never get that feeling with somebody at a mail or in a phone call or sending them a mood board or something. You have to be there to feel the mood, and feel the people around you getting excited...you need to be there to get the full experience”. Comparing to the use of the Internet, B explains that “you only get a taste of it” and that there are some things that they will never be able to convey, which a real life event may. For example the shimmer on a piece of clothing that is not visible digitally. With the event you are also able to create a hype. The hype is explained as for example a special colour or print that the press and bloggers are using frequently. Regarding negative aspects B explains “of course it costs money...and you can never guarantee anything for your client”. There are no guarantees of how many guests will
show up, how the event will turn out or what the response will be afterwards. B describes it as “nerve cracking”. There are always some people who accept the invitation but do not show up. “We do not pay money for people to come”.

Regarding the question of who uses PR events, B answers “people who want to say something about their brand or get a special connection to the press”. B argues that they should be used when there is a new, special and extraordinary occasion, because “if you do not have anything new to say about your brand it does not really matter”. A good reason for having an event is mentioned as for example when a brand releases a new product line with products they have not offered before, or when they do collaborations. It is important that the events are neither too many nor not too few. If too many are used “it can get noisy for the press”, who may start to think that “they are always there”. The guest may also have to choose which event they should attend, and then they might miss an important one. Too few events is not good either as the press then “have no idea of who you are”. “You have to have something to communicate and it has to be interesting for the press to know about it”. This differs a lot as it depends on “how many stories they have to tell the press” and who you are as a brand in terms of what they consider to be new and special. It also depends on the size of the brand. “One client for example are hosting an event for each fashion week, that is two times a year. Another client are having an event when they need to, when they have something new to communicate. It may be that they do not host an event for a year, and then two within six months. Some of the biggest clients we have are having an event once a month”. B describes press day events, which they have two times a year where the clients show their new collections. She explains that it in itself is not a new and special thing, but that the big brands do it because they can. “It has to be a special size of a brand to make one of ones as we do in our showroom. To be one of the really huge Danish brands to make that happen”.

Regarding where events may take place, B explains “it is really difficult to say where because it depends on which event you are hosting. But of course the size of the room is actually one of the most important things when you think of where”. The size of the room is described to be dependent on the amount of people who are attending the event. B has herself been involved in events with five to ten people, as well as 200 to 300 people. “If you are only ten people it is really important that you do not hold it in a huge room, because all the cozyness and interaction between people dies in huge rooms. So if you are having a dinner for ten people it could be great to have a small private room at a restaurant to feel the mood in there. It is cozy, people are talking to each other and so on... I would rather have ten or 30 people standing outside the door and they cannot come in than the other way around”.

4.2.2.1.2 Experiences of events

B explains the planning process prior to the event includes both strategical and practical planning. “We talk to our client and they have to define what their interest is with hosting an event... sometimes they have really important message and sometimes it is more important for them to you know have the connection with the press. There is always some kind of goal or aim, or like an expectation...Sometimes it is how many people are going to attend, sometimes it is how many are going to Instagram or Snapshat or something like that. Or sometimes it is how many are going to pick up the story and print it afterwards...Then we are making a plan of what we are going to do and what they will do themselves”. The practical planning differs a lot. Some of B’s clients have ready forms where they have specific wishes. Other clients may say “I have no idea please do it for me”. Depending on the size of the event, the amounts of time spend on finding options differ. Regarding the estimation of how many guests will attend, B explains that 10-20% of the people who accepts the invitation, do not show up. “We
always estimate, in collaboration with the brand, how many we think is possible to have there. And that is depending on what the message is. Is it something really new, extraordinary new or is it just a press day. We make the estimate of how many will attend after that. So that is a stomach feeling kind of thing”. It is mentioned that the guests may differ, that there may be different guests for different events.

“We are always there at least two hours before to check that the catering has arrived, that the location is perfect and so on”. During the event she “keep everyone happy. Mingling. Maybe checking out the guest list...standing at the door”. The mingling is described as the main thing, as it is important with the personal relations. “It is really extremely important that you take the time to go around and talk to every single one of the guests...And also getting some feedback on the event from them at the same time. So you can go back to your client and say they really liked it. Or maybe next time we should think about this or something”. Representatives from the brand attend “always and that is really really important...I am their person out there but I am not their brand...so it is really really important when we host an event that they have as many people, the whole team for that matter, can be there to explain to people about their idea and the background and all that”.

4.2.2.2 PR events and brand equity

A good event is described to generate positive effect (and vice versa) on brand awareness, brand associations and brand loyalty. Brand awareness and brand loyalty is described as the two main important things with hosting an event. “They want to be remembered. They want to be unique, and to have something else than anybody else. They want to be top of mind”. The brand loyalty is explained to come from the press. She argues that they need them to continue communicating the brand. Thus, you need to keep a good relationship with them. Perceived quality is explained as the least important concept compared to the other brand dimensions, and that it is the least common effect of a PR event. However, if the purpose of an event would be to send the message of good quality, then it would generate a positive impact on the perceived quality. When asked whether a PR event may generate a negative impact on the perceived quality, B answers “no not really...you would never stand and say that it is bad quality”. B describes the difficulty in making generalisations of what effect the brands wish to generate as “it is not like we have two brands that are the same”. It depends on the brand and what they want to communicate.

The most common and easiest way of evaluating events is mentioned to be through a media coverage report, including social media and print as well as how many RSVPd and how many attended. At the same time B remembers situations where the media coverage has been very successful according to their measurements, but the sales numbers have been low. “You cannot measure it the same way that a sales department can measure how much they sold last week.” Sales is of course an effect which the brands see as important, but due to working with seasons it is difficult to see that relationship. An event may for example present a collection that is not out in the stores for another three to six months. “It is difficult to make that direct link between the PR event and the sales...nobody takes that line and estimate it from the event to the end consumer”. The event may though be linked to the sales numbers, as it is the starting point of a hype, which may be maintained and then result in affecting the sales. “But it is again difficult, is it in the event or is it the influencers or anything that happen in between that is the cause. But the event is always the beginning of the hype line”. In some cases an after review report is not wanted. “A lot of our clients do not even really want a coverage report afterwards. It depends on the size of the event”. Regarding the coverage measurement, the more people who are invited, the more Instagram-friendly it is, the more likeable it is, the more coverage it gets.
“If you have a really dark room with bad lightning and lousy ways where you cannot get a
good picture nobody will do it, and that can be any great great brand that host an event but if
you cannot make a great picture you are not gonna post it… the brand awareness will be zero.”
As an effect she explains “I cannot measure anything afterwards if I do not get my posts”.

“You can measure my work but you cannot measure the personal relation between me and the
press”. B explains the difficulties in measuring the personal relations they have with the press,
which is very important regarding the effects. The personal relation is described to include
who they talk to, how and when. The feelings and mood and such are described to be able to
be measured in the media coverage, but only to some extent. “It is really difficult because it is
so much in the relation, mood, cozyness, not cozyness and so on. So I think from our and our
clients point of view it is all about how we feel when we are attending ourselves… it is much
more about the client and their feeling about it. Were they happy, were people talking to them,
were they a general good vibe in the room, stuff like that. I think that is the main thing for
them to know. Trying to be there and feel how people are feeling”.

When asked about other possible ways to measure the effects of PR events, B answers that
she has never experienced it. Giving it some thought, she describes that you could send a
sheet of questions to the press that attended the event to investigate the effect and mood.
Simultaneously she adds that it will never be an option, due to the personal relations. “Again
with the personal relation it would be catastrophically to send out a sheet like that because
the press would be like what the fuck. But I think that could be a way to find out what the
actually effect or mood of the event was”.

“After the crisis in 2012, a lot of brands were rethinking twice before hosting an event,
because is it actually worth the money. Are we getting the relationship, the coverage or
whatever, due to this event or is it just because we are nice people and we send you email and
call you sometimes. Discussing whether PR events are worth it or not she adds “you do not
really see what you get out from a PR event”.

4.2.3 Participant C - PR professional

The participant representing the third company perspective, called PR professional, is a male
with 12-15 years of experience from the industry. He started on the shop floor, and then
advanced to working with brand development and brand positioning. He has worked with PR
events in different ways; he has organized his own events, he has contracted them out to
others and he has himself been contracted to organize events for others. He plans, organizes,
executes, and evaluates events to different extent. All events are invitation only. He is
originally from Australia but has worked within the industry around the world. It is his
experiences from Copenhagen that is discussed in the interview, which is also mirrored by his
work within the luxury industry. In the following the participant is called “C”.

4.2.3.1 PR events

4.2.3.1.1 Characteristics

When asked to define PR events, participant C answers with no hesitation that it is an aspect
of the marketing strategy. “PR events, PR along with advertising along with digital along
with all these different avenues, are mere channels of communicating the strategy and the
purpose of the brand... it is very very important that it is strategically driven, which kind of
relates to the brand, which then relates to the business objectives, and then relates to having a
return on investments”. C argues that some people in the industry are misguided to think that
events are more important than they really are. He explains “events are key but having a clear objective to the event, which taps into overall objective, is even more important”.

Discussing positive and negative aspects of PR events he mentions that they are hard to execute. From his experiences of working with high luxury brands, he perceived that they had a hard time to trust him or anyone else to implement and execute high-level events. The brands are often critical to deliverables, targets and return on investments, hoping it will generate sales. “So why are we doing this, what do we put into it and what are we getting out of it”. What is positive with events is described to be the launch element, contact to clients and the opportunity to create an “experiential authentic moment”. The moment is explained as a moment when the brand can encounter the client and vice versa, and you can add a brand experience that is positive and long lasting. “The positive for a guest is the definite feel good factor”.

Regarding why events take place, C discusses “to throw an event for the sake of throwing an event is like throw money out the window, there is no point to it. You need to have something special...it is always important to have a star factor, there has to be something good about the event...there need to be something, there has to be a wow factor, a draw card for them to be there”. C points out the importance as well as difficulty of quality in the events. C describes some cases where he has tried to shut down events, due to that they would not be perfect. “Brands are very very hands on when it comes to this, to make sure everything is perfect according to brand guidelines, and if not then they remove themselves”. Mentioning that brands are critical to return on investments, he also explains that “in the end it is about sales”.

C argues that most brands use events and that instead of the question of who, the question of how they use it and how it fits into their strategy is more important. “The younger more commercial brands...they have some sort of activations/events almost every month, but that is very much part of their DNA. Where is the high luxury brands are limited, they do not like to overdo it so you might be lucky that you might have one event per year”. The quality of the attended guests is described to be important. “When I say the right guest, it is the right guest according once again to your objective. So are they A) the right to tweet and Instagram and promote your brand, and B) the right guest to grow in your database, or C) the right guest to actually make the purchase of your products that you expose them to”. The mix of these three aspects is the key. “A lot of brands are more concerned about having quality of people attending the event and the right type of people, than having a lot of people”.

The key event period when the most events take place is described to be September/October/November. This is due to that there is a greater focus on the Autumn Winter (AW) collections, because of the Scandinavian weather and as more money are generated on the outerwear pieces. Furthermore, C explains that events usually take place on a Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday. This is due to that the weekend is more personal, and that it might be hard to secure the guests attending as they might have other plans. “It is always better to do an event on a Tuesday or Wednesday. It is the middle in the week, it is something good to fill up your calendar with”. C discusses further the time aspect on the event day and argues that it is not good to have an event too late in the evening. By C’s experience it is preferable not too long after 17pm, as that is when people usually get off from work. By this you do not keep the guests waiting between their job and the event. Events may be used in situations such as a launch, celebration or that for example the creative director is visiting
Copenhagen. The aspect of where events are used is linked to the brands strategy. However, C has observed a trend of having off sight events where the events are not hosted in the stores.

4.2.3.1.2 Experiences of events

Prior to the event the strategy is in place. “In the beginning of the year when you start planning your strategy, you will know that within this strategy and plan of the year you have x amount of launches, x amount of budget, x amount of objectives to be achieved…and then according to that planning you would know clearly where your two key events take place, or three or four. And then you know how much money you got to deal with”. Stating why the event is used and having measurable targets prior to the event is significant. There is also a practical planning. The process of inviting guests includes usually from C’s experiences, to send out a save the date four weeks ahead, send out print invitations, and then following up with a call to those who have not replied. C explains that the printed invitation should be unique and memorable so that the guests want to open them. Sending out an invitation with email is not an option. He has also experienced that they send out a save the date with an invitation to the store where they will receive a gift along with their invitation. This is a way to make the guest more eager to come to the event, because of the gift but also the face-to-face interaction as they may have a harder time to decline then.

During the event “the format is yeah champagne, canapés, you wait for most of the guests to arrive, you give them about 30-45 minutes, you would have some sort of talk or welcome to your guests explaining why is that we are here and why is that we are having an event…then they receive some sort of incentive to maybe purchase something, that they receive a discount for that night only or they get a bonus for that night only. Then you give them some sort of gift, you always give them a goodie bag”. The top sales guys should help to co-host the event and be there to mingle and network with the guests. The message should be coherent all the way through. For example if focus is on a specific product, you may do product placements on celebrities that are coming to the event.

4.2.3.2 PR events and brand equity

In general it is described that a good event generates positive impact while a bad event generates negative impact, which is valid for all brand dimensions. “If it is a shit event then it will send a bad impression on the perception of the brand, because an event is just an extension of the brand. An event is an aspect of the brand so if it is not executed well then naturally the perception changes”. The overall effect of PR events is described to be brand awareness and attendance. “Those are the two key things…to encounter your clients or customer at an event, and once again have that experience with them, or them have an experience with you about the brand”.

When asked about what type of events gives what type of effects, C refers to the objective of the brand. If the objective is to create brand awareness, then the brand has to make a quality or quantity decision. Either they may focus on a smaller quality group where the outcome per person is greater. Or they may do a larger scale event where the focus is to reach a greater audience. Regarding brand loyalty, for already existing customers, the event may be used to show loyalty to them by offering an exclusive opportunity to see the new collection for example. The list management is crucial and differs depending on what the brand wishes to achieve, such as if you need recruitment of new customers, or trendsetting or just a “general feel good vibe”.

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C compares the effect on loyal versus new customers, and argues that they both have expectations but that they differ. The expectation of the loyal customer is based on past experiences from earlier events, which are on a higher level than of those they have been to before and not below. For example if they have been served unlimited amount of champagne at an event, they expect to get that the next time as well and not just one glass. The new customer has more open expectations of the event, at the same time as they expect to be impressed. Expectations on a higher level may generate the effect to a higher level, positive or negative, and vice versa.

When asked about whether it is possible to evaluate how the event went, C answers without hesitation “absolutely”. Taking up the planning in the beginning of the year regarding strategy and objectives, he argues that from that planning “you have some set targets in place and you measure it about that”. Some examples of objectives that are mentioned are PR exposure, database acquisition, clientele and sales. The planning in the beginning of the year is the reason to why the brand may determine whether the event was worth it or not. “You actually want to measure it all the way through. That is why you have brand guidelines and so much pre work is done to ensure that the event is according to brand expectations”. Sales numbers are explained as a valid measure, both prior to and after the event. The effect is visible prior to the event as some clients come in to the store and purchase clothes to wear at the event. In terms of after the event, the PR event is explained to create PR and exposure, which then generates brand awareness and then sales. Other ways of measuring the event is described to be overall attendance and interest of the event. “You want to measure the buzz”. Social media is explained as playing a big part; “now it is all about the moment, recording myself and connecting myself to the moment through hash tags or through those 15th seconds of videos of here I am at the Gucci party”. The overall interest is not only limited to the guests of the event, but also considers those who are not invited. C describes situations where people who have not been invited to an event have asked for an invitation. “This is ironically, this is actually a measure of how successfully your event is because you generate additional interest of people who were not invited”. In terms of brand associations, the effect is visible at the event and after the event. “You feel and hear its value”. C further explains “quite often in luxury you would always find that your high-end clients will always send you a note of thanks or send you chocolate or flowers saying thank you for inviting them to the event. So you do get a response”.

C explains his personal thoughts on events as “I hate events because I have been to too many, and I have organized too many myself...my free time is more important than spending an evening standing in a Gucci store drinking champagne”. In the same way he explains that the luxury customers do not need the brand to eat at a nice restaurant or drink champagne, they can afford that themselves. “I think there is a trend that lot of people are questioning events, a lot of people are bored with events. Everything you can think of events has been done before”. “I think a lot of the times events are a waste of money”. C discusses that he thinks that there are other, better ways to meet the brand objectives. “You can achieve brand awareness a thousand times better through doing a direct segmented digital campaign”. Working on press relations is also described as a better investment. “I have a greater return on the investment, security in getting exposure, by hand grooming and feeding my press and giving them a little bit of an experience with the brand, than if I have an event”. Another thing to focus on is the sales staff, incentivise them to give better service, to provide a better in-store experience for the customers. Give them the power to give discounts. Discussing the future of PR events, despite the technology and globalization, C does not think that events will be less used.
4.2.4 Participant D - blogger

The participant representing the fourth perspective is a young Danish female blogger. In her own words her title is “social media influencer”, as she does not only have a blog but is also active on social media tools, such as Instagram and Snapchat. She started her blog in September 2015 and has worked with it full time since January 2016. She has experiences from visiting events. She has 37 thousand followers on Instagram in the writing moment, as well as various different ambassadorships. In the following the participant is called “D”.

4.2.4.1 PR events

4.2.4.1.1 Characteristics

After some hesitation a PR event is defined as “a gathering of people who are interested in whatever they are presenting and then you showcase your products and you network”. Participant D also mentions that it is difficult to speak of events in general terms. Networking is described as a main positive aspect of PR events as it opens up the possibility for meeting new people and starting new collaborations. Nurturing the relationships with the brands, or their PR representatives that you want to work with, is very important. In the case of a PR agency she explains that it is important for her to keep a good relationship with them in order to for her to get good business deals with their clients. “If you never go you are not gonna be their number one choice and that is your goal because that is where the money is”. At the same time it is an opportunity for her “to know what is out there and what is happening and what trends are forming...to stay aware all the time”. Regarding negative aspects D argues “I do not think there is anything bad about events. I think it is much stronger to have people come in and present something than it is to just send out a mail about some news”.

In the terms of why and when PR events are used, she explains that if it is an event for consumers, it is to make the brand more appealing. “In every aspect of life you get that friendly feeling either if it is a brand or a person you always keep coming back for having a very nice memory of that brand...so you impress your customers and I think that is a really important tool”. In the case of an event for public relations, the events are used to create a stronger awareness of the brand and to create a stronger network. Furthermore, D explains that “the whole bottom of creating events is to create awareness of your brand...every brand also cares about their customers and who is it and who is our target group and all of that but in the end it is all about money and they do not really care who buys it as long as somebody buys it”.

D believes that events are used by either “the young kind of fast fashion smart brands or the really expensive brand. I do not really feel like the middle market is very active in this whole event thing”. When asked to develop her argument, D describes that of course the middle market may use PR events and they may need it. Although, based on her observations they do not use them. She has no explanation to this. D describes both invitation only and public events, as well as events for consumers and for the press. Geographically PR events take place in bigger cities “because that is where the most money is”. D describes the smaller town where she grew up as a place where it would be less normal to go to a PR event. “Where I come from we would be like oh why is that”. Approximating two PR agencies and three bloggers, she explains that the citizens are not used to PR events or similar activities. In Copenhagen, where she lives now, the population is bigger and it is a more normal place to have PR events. “You have to again go where the awareness can be created the most”. Further on D describes that events may take place everywhere, but that it should be consistent with the brand identity.
4.2.4.1.2 Experiences of events

Discussing her role as a blogger versus a consumer, D states that she sees herself having a business role. Developing her statement she argues that working as a blogger full time, her “job is as much to get consumers as it is for a clothing brand”. She explains that she rarely goes to public events but instead to invitation only events, as she goes to so many. Furthermore, she describes that her thoughts on PR events now, are different compared to before. Before she started to work as a social media influencer, she thought going to PR events were “super exciting…You can get a glass of champagne you get to feel pampered and a little more fancy and I think a lot of people appeal to that”. As for her perceptions of it now, she describes it as going to work; “I am at work everywhere I go because I am a public face so for me it is not so much an enjoyment experience anymore. It can be really nice but you also have to remember that you are at work, you are a professional, so you cannot just totally be yourself like you can if you are just a consumer because nobody knows you”.

D describes her expectations prior to an event to vary, depending on if the event is hosted by a brand that she knows from before or whether she has been interactive with or not. Regarding a brand that she has no past experiences of, she has no expectations. In the cases where she has been to other events hosted by the same brand before, she has expectations that the next event will be an experience to the same level. For example that the food will be as good as in the last event. As an ambassador, she sometimes has to come to some events as a part of a business deal. “It depends on how much the brand buys you…if it is just about clothes basically they cannot really tell you that you have to be there, but if there is money involved then you are like a face. In those cases it is more about showing that I am there and to be supportive of the brand you are an ambassador for”. During the event she describes that she “check out all the news because I have to stay on top of these things to be the most relevant blogger”. It is also important for her to work on the relationships with the brands and the PR representatives. D explains that after attending an event “I normally go with a feeling of that something was really great, either the clothes or the food or the PR girl... There is always something that was really nice”. Hence, a good experience may generate a positive impact. At the same time she describes that you can also get negative feelings after an event, that there is always something positive and negative with everything. A negative aspect in an experience may spread to the overall feeling of an event, such as a bad smell. “You can never make everyone happy”.

4.2.4.2 PR events and brand equity

PR events are described to create awareness of brands. Depending on if it is a brand that you know from before or not, the effect differs. The creation of awareness and interest is present in both situations. However if the PR event is bad, the new brand will have a greater negative impact as compared to the known brand. “If I like one collection and then the next one was bad, then I would loose it like loose my excitement for them, because they do not get too may chances because they are new in my mind. But if it was something that I had loved for years and they made a bad collection I would still wait to see the next one. The same goes for the events. I think it creates a lot of awareness even though it is a new one but you also forget it easier”. She further relates this issue to friends; “It is like your friends. Your best friend can piss you off even more than your new friends because then it is like - ok you are a douche. It takes longer for a best friend to make mistakes that will make you leave him or her”. D explains that brand awareness is the most important effect of a PR event. “Brand awareness is everything because if no one knows about you then you do not exist”. Comparing new brands and well-established ones, she argues that it is important for both cases. New brand need to
make people aware of that they exist, and old brands need to keep the awareness that they have.

Regarding brand associations, a good PR event is described to have a positive effect on the associations linked to both the brand and the products. However, a bad PR event is explained to not necessarily generate a negative effect on the brand. “I think if it is a very established brand and they have a bad event I would not dislike the clothing, I would just dislike the event. I do not think it hurts the brand necessarily. I think it hurts the brand way more to have a bad collection...the products and the brand is more important, because that is why you come in the first place”. The perceived quality is not necessarily affected by PR events according to D. “The PR event is not really needed in order for me to believe in a brands quality. You can get that information anywhere”. The information could come from a sales advisor in a store for example, which D argues she would trust. The loyalty towards a brand is on the other hand described to be more affected by PR events. “It is the same if you have a person at the PR that you just do not click with then it can very much hurt the brand I think, because it is bad publicity... It makes me not want to buy it because the person who is handling it or who is my contact into the brand is not nice”. In the same way D explains that a positive experience of a PR event will generate a positive effect on the brand loyalty. She describes a situation where a good experience has affected her positively towards the brand. Even though the products were not her style, she bought it anyway. “It is a very psychological thing. So an event with nice people representing the brand and a nice atmosphere will absolutely affect my loyalty to the brand“. When D is asked whether she feels that she can be loyal to a brand given her role as an ambassador, she argues that she believes that she can. She describes that she only chooses to be an ambassador for brands that she believes in and wants to be a part of.

Discussing whether a certain type of event may generate a certain type of effect, D argues that “the more you give the more you get”. She explains her argument by “if a brand takes you traveling and gives you a whole experience of for example the Gucci summerhouse and you go to Ibiza, then you make me fall in love even more with the brand or the PR girls then you would do at an event in the store where they show you the collection and give you a glass of water”.

D argues that it is possible to review an event and evaluate whether it was successful or not. She has herself worked as a consultant for smaller PR agencies where she has given advises for how their events should be and then helped to evaluate how they went. So that is a possible way in her opinion, to have people that attend the event to evaluate it. However, it is mentioned that it cannot be just anyone to who evaluates. People from the press would for example not have time to answer to a survey on how an event that they attended was. “Nobody would do that because everyone have so much to do. They would never respond to a survey...never”. Instead D explains that the person to evaluate may be a friend of the brand or someone who could do them a favour. If she would do it, she describes that she would not look after anything in particular. “I would just do as I always do, just be there and feel it and eat the food and see if I liked it. And then they could ask me questions afterwards and I could give a review. But it is very much about the feeling and the atmosphere. It is always about the feeling and the people and the food the drinks the clothes... It is all about mood".
4.2.5 Participant E - consumer

The participant representing the final perspective of a consumer is a young Danish female. She works in a shoe shop in a mall in Copenhagen. She has experiences from visiting PR events, which have not required an invitation. In the following the participant is called “E”.

4.2.5.1 PR events

4.2.5.1.1 Characteristics

Pointing out the difficulty in defining PR events, participant E describes it by that “it is a lot of fun, famous people, goodie bags, drinks, cocktails, performance, a singer or something like that to perform...the brands present something”. E also describes events by that “it is an experience, and you can say that you have been there and that you have seen it. And it is super pretty when you stand there, but it does not mean that I go and buy it. It is more like it is fun to go, but it does not matter for what I choose to buy”. The positive aspects of PR events are described to be “that people are talking about it afterwards. Because that is what say if the event went well or not. That is where the value of the event lies”. E further explains that the ones who organize the event and the ones attending may have different opinions, but that it is the opinion of the attending guests that matters. There are no negative aspects of events.

When asked about why PR events are used, E has no explanation. She describes; “it probably depends so much on the brand and their situation, you know...who they are and what they want”. Later in the interview when the brand equity perspective has been added to the conversation, she points out that it differs but brand awareness and brand loyalty is what brands usually want with events. She states that it is “different depending on the brand I think. I think it is really different. Because if it is a small brand it is probably brand awareness, but if it is a big brand it is probably brand loyalty”. Furthermore, she describes events to be used “when something new is happening, like a release or that they start doing something new. Or when brands maybe want some more attention than they have had before”. Some examples mentioned are store openings, releases of new collections, or the start of a collaboration. The strive for attention is described as a result when brands are not very popular and they wish to be more popular.

Regarding who uses PR events, E explains after some thought that it is usually big brands that hold events. She argues that she has not been to any event where she did not know the brand. A possible reason for this is mentioned to be that the big brands can afford it. Regarding where the events may take place, E believes that they may be everywhere but that it depends on what brand it is and their target market. The determining characteristics of the target market are explained as their age and what they like. “You cannot for example have a cool fashion brand in an elder care home, that would be weird”.

4.2.5.1.2 Experiences of events

Prior to an event, E is excited. In some cases she has expectations to the event, and in some she does not. “If you go to an event where you will learn about something totally new, honestly I do not think you have any expectations”. What attracts E to come to an event is the free stuff that is offered. “It sounds super shallow, but yeah goodie bags and food and drinks. I love free stuff”. Given some thought E further adds; “if it is something really special”. When asked to develop further, she answers that she does not know. E describes that it also attracts her if it is interesting to her, such as for example quality shoes. If an event is hosted by a brand with products that are too expensive for her, it will not attract her to come even though
they have that special something. E describes that is it usually a good atmosphere during an event, and that everyone is happy. E describes two kinds of experiences from PR events, good and bad experiences. The good experience is explained as when the event is something fun and exciting, when there is a good atmosphere and everyone is happy. Further, it is when you get something out from the event. This could be when you learn something new about the brand, for example “why a pair of tights are good to run in”. The bad experience is described as when “persons who went there go from there thinking was it only this”. E narrates an example of a bad experience when she was excited prior to an event as a celebrity would attend, but when it came to it she says that it was nothing special. “Afterwards I think there are many who think euh. So it did not really gave anything. The use of someone famous for example. I have been to an event where I was super excited before because it was a famous person that I was about to meet at the event, but when I actually met the person, it was nothing special at all”. E´s personal thoughts regarding PR events are that “I think that the events are more hyped than they actually are…sure sometimes I think events are super awesome and that I really got something out from it, but there are also times where I did not feel that I got something out from it, that it was nothing special”.

4.2.5.2 PR events and brand equity

Brand awareness is described as the most important effect for small brands, as the new customers who do not know it from before get to know the brand. E describes that she thinks that the events increase her brand awareness, “but that is because I kind of like brands. But for someone who does not care for brands I do not think that it has an effect”. Except for the fact that she cares about brands, she also mentions that the events increase her brand awareness if it is interesting to her. “When I shop I invest in clothes or shoes that have good quality…and therefore a PR event of a brand that may have or seem to have that will surely effect my awareness of the brand”. Furthermore, if a brand that the customer does not know of has an event where they inform the customer of for example how to take care of their shoes, E argues that she believes that it will interest the customers and make them buy the products. Brand loyalty is described as the most important effects for big brands. PR events are described to create brand loyalty for new and already existing customers. The customers that know the brand from before and already use it, is described to be more affected by it than the new customers are. The loyal customers get even more loyal. Being an already loyal customer is described as a reason to go to the event.

Regarding brand associations such as differentiation and distinctiveness, E argues that it depends on how big the event is. If it is a small event then it will not make a difference. She continues “probably it is those who not are for us normal people, that make a difference”. When asked about what brand equity dimension is less important, she answers perceived quality. The reason is explained to be that the other dimensions are more important. It may have or not have effect, depending on whether the consumers find it trustworthy.

Speaking of PR events in general, E argues that “either it has no effect or it has a positive effect…Was it ok, then it was ok. And if it was very nice, then it was very nice. So I do not know if events may have a negative effect in that way. That someone think - I will never buy that. Because it is never someone representing the brand that talks negative about it.” What is said at the event is described to either be accepted or not by E, and she believes that this is also valid for others. “I totally think that you believe everything that they say. Of course again, it is different for different persons, but I think that most will believe what they say. Even though they have their own experiences. But people who are easily swayed, if someone say - this shoe is amazing, forget all the bullshit you have heard about it, it is great. Then I am sure there are
some who think - wow...ok lets buy this shoe because he says it is great - and swallows it all. But sure some will say – I have tried it and it sucks.. do not try to tell me it is good quality”.

E explains that she does not know whether it is possible to evaluate an event. “Then they should maybe send some sheet with questions to them who where at the event. And not just care about the big bloggers and stuff but about the normal people. Even though someone may not have a lot of followers on Instagram it is still one point of view. Send out flyers.. maybe in the goodie bags”. The sales numbers are described as not an option to measure the event by. This is due to that “you could think that it was a great event, but maybe you do not afford it this month so you buy it next month instead”. E believes that brands are able to determine whether the event was good or bad. “No one puts it up on Instagram if it not was nice. Or at least I have never seen it. They post on Instagram if they really think it is nice”. When asked about the guests that do not have Instagram, but liked the event and bought afterwards, E answers that she does not know.

### 4.2.6 Word table

Table 2. Word table summarising the results from the interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PR events</th>
<th>Participant A</th>
<th>Participant B</th>
<th>Participant C</th>
<th>Participant D</th>
<th>Participant E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>“I do not have one sort of simple, clean-cut definition...but I can tell you what kind of PR events we have” Communication tool Generator for collaborations Sending a message</td>
<td>“The definition of the PR event is to give the guest a kind of a message from the brand”</td>
<td>“PR events, PR along with advertising along with digital along with all these different avenues, are mere channels of communicating the strategy and the purpose of the brand”</td>
<td>“It is a gathering of people who are interested in whatever they are presenting and you are then you showcase your products and you network”</td>
<td>“It is a lot of fun, famous people, goodie bags, drinks, cocktails, performance, a singer or something like that to perform...the brands present something”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Characteristics</td>
<td>It differs/depends Reputation/image Experience Public relations Positive: message, noise, attention, hype, exposure, interest, good will, PR, personal involvement Negative: invest time, money, passion, energy Why: create sales When: it is relevant and fits the brand, important not to use too many Who: used by everyone Where: usually on the brands premises, or where it fits the brand</td>
<td>It differs/depends Reputation/image Experience Personal relations Positive: unique mood, hype, full experience, numerous options Negative: money and no guarantees Why: send message When: there is a new special extraordinary occasion, important not to use too many Who: used by those who want to say something or connect with the press, guests important Where: size of the room is important, depending on amount of guests</td>
<td>It differs/depends Reputation/image Experience Relationships Positive: feel good factor, launch element, contact to clients, experiential authentic moment Negative: hard to execute, critical about deliverables, targets, return on investments Why: create sales When: something special Who: used by most brands, depend on strategy, quality of guests Where: linked to brand strategy</td>
<td>It differs/depends Reputation/image Experience Relationships Positive: networking, facilitates her job Negative: none Why: create sales, are sometime obligated to attend due to business deal, attracted by the brand/products When: brands want awareness Who: used by young and luxury brands Where: everywhere in bigger cities</td>
<td>It differs/depends Reputation/image Experience Positive: people talk about it afterwards Negative: none Why: cerate brand loyalty for big brands and brand awareness for small brands, choose to go by something special and free stuff When: new happening or want attention Who: used by big brands Where: may be everywhere, should be linked to the brand identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences of events</td>
<td>Strategical and practical planning Goal, aim, expectation Guests Prioritising Check everything is ready Nurturing relationships Try to maximise it 10 minutes of the show – “it is out of my hands”</td>
<td>Strategical and practical planning Guests Presentation of the reason to the event Incentive to make a purchase Gift/goodie bag Top sales guys should co-host and attend The message should be coherent</td>
<td>Strategical and practical planning Guests</td>
<td>Role of a business partner vs. consumer Expectations Sometimes attend as part of a business deal Check out all the news and work on relationships Positive and negative feelings Usually positive feelings</td>
<td>Excitement Expectations Good and bad experiences Attracted by free stuff and if it is something special Not attracted by too expensive brands Usually a god atmosphere and everyone is happy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# PR events and brand equity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand equity Dimensions</th>
<th>Effect on brand awareness, brand associations and perceived quality</th>
<th>No effect on brand loyalty</th>
<th>Perceived quality and brand associations is most important</th>
<th>Quality event gives qualitative effect</th>
<th>More is more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A good event have positive effect on all dimensions</td>
<td>A bad event have negative effect on all dimensions except from perceived quality</td>
<td>Brand awareness and brand loyalty is most important</td>
<td>There is no effect in general that brands wish to generate</td>
<td>The guest accept what is said at the event</td>
<td>A good event have positive impact and vice versa, valid for all brand dimensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The overall effect is brand awareness and attendance</td>
<td>The effect is greater on loyal customers than on new customers</td>
<td>Effect on brand awareness, brand associations and brand loyalty</td>
<td>Not needed to generate effect on perceived quality</td>
<td>Effect on all dimensions</td>
<td>Brand awareness and brand loyalty is most important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived quality and brand associations is most important</td>
<td>Quality event gives qualitative effect</td>
<td>PR events have either a positive effect or no effect</td>
<td>Depend on interest to the consumer, size of the brand, size of the event, if the consumer accept what is said at the event, loyal or new consumer</td>
<td>Depend on new or established brands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation of contribution</th>
<th>Measure by qualitative evaluation</th>
<th>“We just trust our instinct and our gut feeling and you know, are we pleased?”</th>
<th>Quantitative evaluation is only relevant to relate to seasons</th>
<th>Can measure media coverage</th>
<th>Can measure relations/feelings/mood to some extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Events can be measured</td>
<td>Measure before, during and after</td>
<td>Measure by media coverage, responses from guests, overall interest, sales numbers</td>
<td>“You feel and hear its value”</td>
<td>Events can be evaluated</td>
<td>Possible to see if it was successful or not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events can be evaluated</td>
<td>Evaluation of the experience by someone attending</td>
<td>Do not know if events can be measured</td>
<td>It is possible to determine if it was a good or a bad event</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal thoughts on PR events</th>
<th>“I think it is a very very good type of tool”</th>
<th>It is worth it</th>
<th>Would like to use it more</th>
<th>“Is it actually worth the money. Are we getting the relationship, the coverage or whatever, due to this event or is it just because we are nice people and we send you email and call you sometimes…you do not really see what you get out from a PR event”</th>
<th>“Events are key but having a clear objective to the event, which taps into overall objective, is even more important”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I think it is much stronger to have people come in and present something than it is to just send out a mail about some news”</td>
<td>The brands and the products are more important than the events</td>
<td>“I think that the events are more hyped than what they actually are”</td>
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5 Analysis

Guided by the analysis model, the presentation of the analysis consists of two parts reflecting the two research questions. Each factor in the word table (table 2) is in the following addressed, comparing and contrasting the results from the different evidence sources of both observations and interviews. The analysis of the findings includes the consideration of the theories presented in the conceptual framework. In conclusion, answers to the research questions are presented.

The analysis is presented by following the structure of the word table (table 2) and addressing the themes from the analysis model (figure 3). The first part in the analysis reflects the first research question of “what are the fundamental aspects of PR events in the fashion industry” and includes the themes characteristics (including the subthemes what, why, who, when and where) and experiences of events (including the subthemes before, during and after). The second part in the analysis reflects the second research question of “how do PR events contribute to brand equity in the fashion industry” and includes the themes brand equity dimensions (including brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty), evaluation of contribution and personal thoughts on PR events. The grey coloured concepts in the model represent the main perspectives considered. Participant A (the brand), B (the PR agency) and C (the PR professional) represent the brand perspective, while E (the blogger) and D (the consumer) represent the consumer perspective.

![Figure 3. Analysis model](image-url)
5.1 What are the fundamental aspects of PR events in the fashion industry?

5.1.1 Characteristics

Table 3. Word table: characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
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<th>Participant B</th>
<th>Participant C</th>
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**What: definition**

Only one participant (C) defines PR events without hesitating. Three participants (B, D and E) show signs of uncertainty but try to explain the concept. Participant A shows a strong reaction to and is rather surprised by the task to define PR events. He explains that he does not have “one sort of simple, clean-cut definition”, and does not try to come up with one. Though pointing out that PR is about public relations, he argues that depending on who is targeted, the kind of PR event will be defined. Relationships are identified as a main aspect of PR, of which importance is supported by the conceptual framework. Hutton (1999, p. 208) defines PR as “managing strategic relationships”, while Hagan (2011, p. 44) defines it by among other things “public relations is relationship management, reputation management, issues management and crisis management”. McKie and Willis (2012) explain that PR has a holistic worldview, considering the dynamic and fast moving world of uncertainty and unpredictability, where relationship building beyond the consumers helps the company to meet the challenges. This worldview is shared by A (see “brand loyalty”, p. 58) and B (see “negative aspects”, p. 50).

Arvidsson (2006) argues that brands are immaterial, informational objects that add value to products. PR events are described to convey these aspects of the brand to the guests. In different ways all participants address the message and speak of events as a communication tool/channel. C defines events as a communication channel, while B defines it by the message which is send from the brand to the guest via the event. Participant A mentions both the
communication channel and the message when describing events. D and E mention the presentation of something. However, D describes it as a gathering where those who are interested participate and E relates it to having fun and getting free stuff. The fact that D and E represent the consumer perspective may explain that they are not using the exact words of communication channel or message, but speak of it as from their perspective. viewing PR events as a communication tool/channel is supported by Kotler (2009) who describes PR as a communication activity, which is about promoting and protecting the company’s image and offerings. Basically all brand perspectives touch upon the argument of Ida Klamborn who praise PR events as they create the opportunity to express the brand exactly how she wants to, to convey the vision and feeling, which in her opinion is incredible important (Ljung 2016). The image and reputation of brands, which was identified as a main aspect of PR in the conceptual framework, are not literary but figuratively mentioned by all participants and found to be important from the observations.

Hutton (1999) argues that PR has different situational roles, including different primary functions performed and tactics/tools utilized, all depending on the context. Similarly, all participants frequently mention that it differs and depends on various aspects. Events may for example have five or 500 guests, be invitation only or open for the public, a dinner, a fashion show et cetera. The questions of why, when, who and where may depend on for example the size of the brand, what the purpose is, the budget and who the brand is targeting. Furthermore, the effects may for example depend on whether the consumers know the brand from before or if the consumers believe what is said at the event. This was found in the observations and the interviews. B argues that “that is the fluffy part of PR events”.

At the same time all participants mention that the events that brands have should fit their strategy and objective, which was frequently mentioned as a dependent variable. C argues that “events are key but having a clear objective to the event, which taps into overall objective, is even more important”. He gives examples of younger commercial brands that have monthly events and high luxury brands that have about one per year. He explains it by that brands use events in a way that it fits their strategy. Participant A, D and E argue that where events should take place, should be somewhere where it is congruent with the brand. A explains it as “you want to find something that fits the brand, product, collection, what ever you want to do. You do not want to go to an old jail house if you are promoting something super romantic and girly, unless you have a very conscious contradiction in what you do...you try to find something that supports your brand DNA”. B who defines events by the message, argues that events differs a lot as it depends on “how many stories they have to tell” and who you are as a brand, in terms of what they consider to be new and special.

**What: positive aspects**

Participant A, C and D describe the opportunity to network and work on relationships with the press, influencers and consumers. C also mentions “the positive for a guest is the definite feel good factor”. E, the consumer, argues from the brands perspective that the positive with events is that people talk about it afterwards, as that is where the value for the brands lies. This is something that all representatives of the brand perspective mention in various ways (see section 5.2, p. 56). Participant A mentions that through the event they may send a message, make noise, and generate attention/hype/exposure/interest/good will. B highlights the opportunity to create a hype, and recognize a positive aspect in the difficulty to define PR events; “that is the beauty of having an event, you can do it in so many different ways”. C brings up the launch element and A the staging of the products and the brand. D, the blogger, explains that events give her the opportunity “to know what is out there and what is
happening and what trends are forming...to stay aware all the time”, which thereby facilitates her job.

All representatives of the brand perspective speak of the opportunity to create a certain experience, which cannot be replaced with digital activities. Participant A points out the trend of consumers wanting an experience, which was identified in the conceptual framework; “I think our industry is becoming more and more and more driven by events and by the need for you know people want to experience something...how can we turn it into an experience”. What is explained as unique for the live event is the personal and physical involvement. B describes the possibility to create a unique kind of mood; “you can never get that feeling with somebody at a mail or in a phone call or sending them a mood board or something. You have to be there to feel the mood, and feel the people around you getting excited”. She further explains “you need to be there to get the full experience”. The full experience includes some features that digital cannot convey, such as seeing the shimmering on a piece of clothing. C mentions the opportunity to create an “experiential authentic moment”. This is explained as a moment when the brand can encounter the client and vice versa, and you can add a brand experience that is positive and long lasting. The meeting with the clients is not possible digitally. The staging of products in the event is mentioned by all brand perspectives. A and B speak of making everything a photo opportunity and “Instagram-friendly”, which C also touches upon describing the crucial role of social media; “it is all about the moment, recording myself and connecting myself to the moment through hash tags or through those 15th seconds of videos of here I am at the Gucci party”. All brand perspectives further stress that every little detail in the experience matters and that it is crucial (see “experiences of events”, p. 53).

What: negative aspects
Regarding the negative aspects all brand perspectives bring up what they sacrifices in order to host events. Participant A and B describe that they invest money while A also mentions time, passion, and energy. C expresses that brands have a hard time to trust people to implement and execute high-level events, and that brands often are critical about deliverables, targets and return on investments. “So why are we doing this, what do we put into it and what are we getting out of it”. He further argues that events are difficult to execute. Except for that events costs money, B explains that there are no guarantees. They never know for a fact how many guests will show up, how the event will turn out or what the response will be afterwards. B describes it as “nerve cracking”. The consumer perspectives do not address what the brands have to sacrifice. The blogger (D) argues “I do not think there is anything bad about events”. The consumer (E) agrees as she describes that there are no negative aspects of events.

Why
All participants speak of sales and thus consider consumers as someone who purchase or may purchase the brands products. This is congruent with Kendalls (2009) view as he defines them by these specific actions. Kendall (2009) also argues that brands have one single simplistic goal, which is to generate revenues and be profitable. This is supported by participant A, C and D who points out the final goal as to create sales. A explains the chain of events to be that you sell more products if you have a brand awareness, and you get more brand awareness if you get exposure. D argues that for consumers, events are used to make the brand more appealing while for PR, events are used to create stronger brand awareness and stronger network. However, she stresses that in the end it is all about creating awareness in order to creating sales. Brand awareness is also mentioned by E who first notifies that she do not know why events are used; “it probably depends so much on the brand and their situation, you
know...who they are and what they want”. Later when brand equity is introduced to the conversation, she argues that “if it is a small brand it is probably brand awareness, but if it is a big brand it is probably brand loyalty”. B, who defines events with the message that is conveyed through them, explains that it is important to have a purpose; “it is very important that it is not just a meet and greet kind of event...you have to have something to communicate and it has to be interesting for the press to know about it”. E also argues for that it is important to get something out from an event. The importance of a purpose is also mentioned by C, who describes “to throw an event for the sake of throwing an event is like throw money out the window, there is no point to it”. He further argues that you need to have something special, a star/wow factor, a draw card. The observations further support the importance of a purpose as there is always a purpose for an event, big or small. The blogger describes that she attends some events as a part of a business deal. As an ambassador, she attends to show that she is there and to be supportive of the brand. She is attracted to attend events because of the brand and their products. E explains that free stuff and if it is interesting or something special it attracts her to go, while she is not attracted by too expensive brands that she cannot afford. This is linked to the theory of Schiffman et al. (2011), that an individual’s personality, the psychological characteristics, determines how we behave. B also alludes to this as she argues that it is crucial to have a message that is interesting to the guests at the event.

In short, PR events are used to obtain value. Arvidsson (2006) discusses the brand as a tool for mediating value, which consumers and companies derive value from in different ways. For consumers, a brand is a social tool and a resource of production as they may express identities and such. For companies, a brand is a strategic tool to make consumers into customers. They take the productivity of the consumers and make it into a business. E mentions that going to an event "is an experience, and you can say that you have been there and that you have seen it", which indicates the social tool for consumers. She gets an experience, which was also how she defined events, that she may share with others. She obtains the immaterial/informational value of a brand, which Arvidsson (2006) defines brands to possess. The discussions of sales numbers and the final goal as creating sales indicate the strategic tool for companies. This discussion supports the theories of Chieng and Lee (2011) and Yoo, Donthu and Lee (2000) who describe brand equity as the added value to a product that comes with a brand. Events are used to convey the brands added value to consumers. If the brands did not contain the added value, perhaps the events would not be used as much. This may furthermore be linked to the brand equity characteristic of that it includes both tangible (such as revenues) and intangible (such as brand awareness) values.

When
The question of when is often related to the question of why. D stresses on that events are used when brands want to create awareness, which E also touches upon as she argues they are used when brands want to create more attention. B argues that events are used when there is a new, special and extraordinary occasion, which is supported by C and E. An occasion could be for example a launch, celebration or that the creative director visits Copenhagen. B explains the reason to be “if you do not have anything new to say about your brand it does not really matter”. Participant A and B describe that it is important not to use too many events. B explains it as “it can get noisy for the press” and A expresses “how many events can I have for the same group of people”. B further argues that too few are not good either as the press then “have no idea of who you are”. Finding the balance depends on how many stories you have, who you are as a brand, size of the brand, the message, the guests et cetera. A explains that it is dependent on when it is relevant and fits the brand. C is the only participant speaking of the key time aspect for when events should be used. He advises to host events in the period
between September and November as this is in relation to the AW collections, which have the more expensive outerwear pieces, which is further related to the goal of creating sales. He further proposes hosting events in the start of the week and not too late in the evening, but sometime after five o’clock when people usually get off from work. He argues that the weekend is more personal and that they do not want to keep the guests waiting between their job and the event. The observations also include the work versus free time discussion. The employees at the agency express that they do not want to take peoples free time, and thereby prefer morning or day events. This is especially when it is not a big brand hosting the event. On the other hand, the observations also indicate that there is some motivation to attend events even though ones free time and work time is offered.

Who
Regarding who hosts events, B and C refer to their definition of events. B, who defines it by the message, argues “people who want to say something about their brand or get a special connection to the press”. C describes that it is used by most brands, but that it is not a question of whom but of how they use it and how it fits with their strategy. This was also touched upon by participant A who mentions that everyone uses events, but that the events have to suit the brand. For example if a brand only have white t-shirts, then it is not suited to have fashion shows. D separates brands by markets and describes that events are used by young fast fashion brands or luxury brands and not by the middle market. E argues that it is only big brands that have events, because they can afford it.

Another main aspect with regard to the question of who, is the guests of events. A, B and C are exclusively hosting invitation only events. The guests are a main topic discussed during these interviews, and by the observations, and is described as important. A and C discuss about the quality of the guests. Participant A mentions that the guests are considered “as someone who could spread the word somehow and expose your brand, expose your product, make you top of mind, make you a preferred choice...You put a lot of trust on the fact that people who come for the event have a good experience that they are sharing somehow”. A quality guest is explained to generate a quality effect (see section 5.2, p. 56). A, B and C speak of having quality guests instead of a greater quantity of guests. E touches upon this as she explains “probably it is those who not are for us normal people, that make a difference”, while talking about the kind of events regarding the effect of brand associations. C speaks of quality guests as to be right to the brands objective; right to promote the brand, right to grow into the database, and right to make a purchase. B, just as C, refers to her definition when speaking of who to attend. She describes that they estimate how many may come depending on the message, if it is something really new or a more common event. D and E, representing the consumer perspective, do not go into this issue very deeply. D talks about events for either the consumers or for the press and has attended both invitation only and public events. E has only been to public events, where no invitation was required.

Possible attending guests of events are mentioned as consumers, press, influencers, bloggers, key opinion leaders and buyers. Events may be invitation only or open for the public. However, D explains that she does not attend these kinds of events after she became a blogger, which makes E the only one referring to them during the interviews. Given the focus on invitation only events and quality guests, the question of for whom events are becomes relevant. Relating to the attention of creating sales, it may be interpreted that brands host events for people who may further influence the final consumer to purchase the products. By this reasoning the consumer is exclusively linked to his or hers actions, which is how Kendall (2009) defines consumers. However, if they need to be influenced in order to carry out the
actions, the view of consumers may be more closely related to the ones of Arvidsson (2006), Sassatelli (2007) and Schiffman et al. (2011) as they add psychological considerations to the definition.

Where
A, C and E speak of where, as to be decided based on whether it fits the brand strategy or not. Further participant A describes that events usually takes place on the brands premises during for example press day events, while C sees a trend of having off sights events. B mentions that the size of the room is of the most important aspects in terms of where, in relation to the amount of guests attending. “If you are only ten people it is really important that you do not hold it in a huge room, because all the cozyness and interaction between people dies in huge rooms. So if you are having a dinner for ten people it could be great to have a small private room at a restaurant to feel the mood in there. It is cozy, people are talking to each other and so on…I would rather have ten or 30 people standing outside the door and they cannot come in than the other way around”. D explains that events are hosted in bigger cities as “that is where the most money is…you have to go where the awareness can be created the most”, relating it to the purpose of having events.

5.1.2 Experiences of events
Table 4. Word table: experiences of events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiences of events</th>
<th>Participant A Brand</th>
<th>Participant B PR agency</th>
<th>Participant C PR professional</th>
<th>Participant D Blogger</th>
<th>Participant E Consumer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ...                   | Strategical and practical planning
  1) when 2) where 3) who 4) creative forma
  Guests
  Prioritising
  Check everything is ready
  Nurturing relationships
  Try to maximise it 10 minutes of the show – “it is out of my hands” | Strategical and practical planning
  Goal, aim, expectation
  Guests
  Check everything is perfect
  Keep everyone happy
  Mingle
  Representatives of the brand should attend | Strategical and practical planning
  Guests
  Presentation of the reason to the event
  Incentive to make a purchase
  Gift/goodie bag
  Top sales guys should co-host and attend
  The message should be coherent | Role of a business partner vs. consumer
  Expectations
  Sometimes attend as part of a business deal
  Check out all the news and work on relationships
  Positive and negative feelings | Usually positive feelings
  Attracted by free stuff and if it is something special
  Sometimes attracted by expensive brands
  Usually a god atmosphere and everyone is happy |

Before
Both D and E speak of expectations to events. D describes that she has no expectations of an unknown brand, but expectations of a known brand. E supports this as she means “if you go to an event where you will learn about something totally new, honestly I do not think you have any expectations”. E further explains that she is excited prior to events. B argues that there is always a goal, aim or expectation prior to an event.

All brand perspectives discuss strategical and practical planning aspects. C describes that the planning starts at the beginning of the year when they set out the objectives and strategy. By that they know how many happenings will occur and how much budget they have. Stating why the event is used and having measurable targets prior to the event is explained to be significant. B describes that the amount of time spend on the practical planning depends on the size of the event. Participant A describes the certain steps in their planning process to be when, where, who and the creative forma. A also mentions that he bases his decisions on prioritising, such as sending digital instead of printed invitations and then be able to book five extra models for a fashion show. On the contrary, C explains that they do printed invitations and that sending digital invitations are not an option. The invitations should be unique and memorable so that the guests want to open them. He describes situations where the invitations also have included the offering of a gift to be collected in the store. By this, he argues that
they get a face-to-face meeting with the invited guests, which makes it harder for them to decline the event.

As with the question of who, all brand perspectives speak of the importance of the guests. The invitation process includes several steps such as save the date, invitation, RSVP and following up on the answers. The guest lists are developed with great thought. This was found in all brand perspectives and in the observations. However, A describes “we regard ourselves as the Prada of Copenhagen Fashion Week. People coming for Milan Fashion Week, they know when Prada is having the show and they investigate and make sure to reserve that day. We expect that people who are relevant for our show to reserve the date, so we do not send out a save the date, we send an invitation”. This is a rather more confident attitude towards securing the guests than B and C have. B describes not knowing how many guests will show up as “nerve cracking”. The nervousness of the uncertainty is also found in the observations.

During
As mentioned above, every little detail matters and is crucial for the experiences of events. A and B describe the finalizing of the preparations as making sure that everything is in place. Participant A expresses “I always end up yelling and screaming at someone because if I do not, it is something that is not good enough”. This indicates that they always want to do better. He further describes that they have moved the date of an event to take place later, as they did not have the right furniture and were not ready to receive guests then. Similarly, C describes “brands are very very hands on when it comes to this, to make sure everything is perfect according to brand guidelines, and if not then they remove themselves”. B explains that she is always there 2 hours prior the event to check out that everything is “perfect”. This is similar to the observations, as it was found that every little detail matters, even down to the toilet paper. A and C point out that the message should be coherent. A describes collaborations with hair and make up companies for fashion shows to “make sense” as they also work with them when they shoot the look book; “so you get some consistency from our pictures and our show”. C also points out that the message should be clear. They usually have a talk to present why they have the event. Similarly, the observations indicated a focus on explaining to the guests why they have the event, so that they understand the purpose of it. In terms of experiences, C and B express the importance of having the right people attending the event, both from the company side in order to convey the right message as well as from the consumer side so that they share the right message. B argues representatives from the brand should attend “always and that is really really important…I am their person out there but I am not their brand…so it is really really important when we host an event that they have as many people, the whole team for that matter, can be there to explain people about their idea and the background and all that”. C argues that the top sales guys should co-host and attend, in order to mingle and network with the guests.

Relationships are further discussed by A, B, C and D. Participant A explains that he spend a lot of time “nursing everyone” and taking care of the guests, the employees, the sponsors etcetera. Relationships are important regardless whether it is business partners (paid or not paid employees) or not. The non-paid employees are mentioned to be sponsors as well as employees with a low compensation such as models that receive a small salary. A explains that he wants to make sure that they have a nice day and that it is a good atmosphere, so that they perform well and want to do it again. Relationships are furthermore expressed as especially important to them as their brand is “considered the friendly brand…it is really part of our brand DNA and identity”. B also expresses the importance of relationships, stressing the relationships with the press. B argues it is important with personal relations, to keep good
relationships with the press so they continue communicate their brands, which is crucial for the effects of the event. She describes that mingle is a huge part of the event and that it is important to talk to every single guest. For the blogger (D), the relationships are important in order to get good business deals. Events are described to open up the possibility to network, nurture relationships, meeting new people and possibly securing new collaborations.

The guests are also an important aspect during events. A, B and the observations show that there are always some people who do not show up, even though they have accepted the invitation. A explains that invited guests may not show up, uninvited guests may show up and attending guests may be unsatisfied with their seat. The handling of the unforeseen happenings is described to be based on prioritising, depending on the quality and importance of the guest. “Certain people you will always be able to find a seat, certain people you will always welcome but not to sit, and other people you know it will never happen. You prioritise people like that”.

While having difficulties to understand what is referred to as during the event, A discusses “the ten minutes of the actual show, that is the ten minutes I do nothing. Because then it is out of my hands”. He further explains that they try to extend the string of events, to “maximise” the event by for example bring attention to what happens back stage or on the red carpet. All participants mention the food and drinks that are offered at events, which is also found from the observations. C also explains that they usually have an incentive for the customers to make a purchase such as a discount, and that they always give the guests a gift and/or a goodie bag. The consumer (E) describes that it is usually a good atmosphere and that everyone is happy.

After
Both consumer perspectives (D and E) describe positive as well as negative experiences of events. E describes a good experience as when the event is something fun and exciting, when there is a good atmosphere, everyone is happy and when you get something out from it. A bad experience is explained as when you do not get something out from it and/or when it was nothing special. D expresses that her experiences of events have changed, as she is no longer only a consumer but also obtain a business role as a blogger. She explains that she may get both positive and negative feelings of an event, but that she normally has positive feelings after an event. “I normally go with the a feeling of that something was really great, either the clothes or the food or the PR girl... There is always something that was really nice”. On the contrary, E argues “afterwards I think there are many who think euh. So it did not really give anything”. D further describes that one negative aspect may spread to the overall feeling of an event, at the same time as a good experience is convincing. Schiffman et al. (2011) argues that consumer behaviour is influenced by social and cultural settings. E describes going to an event as “it is an experience, and you can say that you have been there and that you have seen it”. This indicates that she cares of what other people think and that she would like to obtain social value from events. All participants speak of social influences in different ways. However, none are even touching upon cultural influences. The observations and interviews include various ways of evaluating events (see “evaluation of contribution”, p. 60).
5.2 How do PR events contribute to brand equity in the fashion industry?

5.2.1 Brand equity dimensions

Table 5. Word table: brand equity dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand equity dimensions</th>
<th>Participant A Brand</th>
<th>Participant B PR agency</th>
<th>Participant C PR professional</th>
<th>Participant D Blogger</th>
<th>Participant E Consumer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effect on brand awareness, brand associations and perceived quality</td>
<td>A good event have positive effect on all dimensions</td>
<td>A good event generate positive impact and vice versa, valid for all brand dimensions</td>
<td>Effect on brand awareness, brand associations and brand loyalty</td>
<td>Effect on all dimensions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No effect on brand loyalty</td>
<td>A bad event have negative effect on all dimensions except from perceived quality</td>
<td>The overall effect is brand awareness and attendance</td>
<td>Not needed to generate effect on perceived quality</td>
<td>Brand awareness and brand loyalty is most important</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived quality and brand associations is most important</td>
<td>Brand awareness and brand loyalty is most important</td>
<td>Brand awareness is most important</td>
<td>Separate the brand, the products and the event</td>
<td>Separate the brand, the products and the event</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality event gives qualitative effect</td>
<td>There is no effect in general that brands wish to generate</td>
<td>The more the brands give in the event, the more effect will it have</td>
<td>The more the brands give in the event, the more effect will it have</td>
<td>Depend on interest to the consumer, size of the brand, size of the event, if the consumer accept what is said at the event</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More is more</td>
<td>The guest accept what is said at the event</td>
<td>The overall effect is brand awareness and attendance</td>
<td>Depending on new or established brands</td>
<td>Depend on new or established brands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two most common perspectives of brand equity were found by a literature review to be consumer based and financial based brand equity. The consumer based brand equity considers consumers’ response to a brand, while the financial based brand equity focuses on the money brand bring or could bring in (Buil, de Chernatony & Martínez 2013; Chieng & Lee 2011; Valette-Florence, Guizani & Merunka 2011; Yoo, Donthu & Lee 2000). The consumer based perspective acknowledges the active role of consumers, which is congruent with the consumer definitions offered by Arvidsson (2006), Sassatelli (2007) and Schiffman et al. (2011). Participants from both the consumer and the brand perspective argue that the final goal is to create sales, and all participants speak of sales. All participants also consider the consumer to have an active role in developing brand equity. All participants consider both perspectives, and they share similar arguments as well as they have different arguments around both perspectives. The sampling of participants from both perspectives may be the reason to this, as the participants mainly speak from their own point of view. Thereby, there are indications of that both perspectives are relevant.

### Brand awareness

All participants argue that events contribute to brand awareness. D argues it is the most important effect, while B and E describe it as one out of two most important effects. Participant A, who describes the main goal to be creating sales, discusses “you sell more products if you have a brand awareness, and you get more brand awareness if you get some kind of exposure”. D argues “brand awareness is everything because if no one knows about you then you do not exist”. Even though she mentions that the effects are different for new versus known brands, she argues it is important for both kinds. B discusses “they want to be remembered. They want to be unique, and to have something else than anybody else. They want to be top of mind”. C describes the overall effect of PR events to be brand awareness along with attendance. E describes brand awareness as the most important effect for small brands, while big brands have another most important effect. By the participants arguments, there are indications of that the reason for the importance of brand awareness is its contribution to the end goal. E further argues that events generate impact on brand awareness if you are interested in brands and if it is interesting to the person, regardless of known or new
brand. Thus, she explains that events have either a positive effect or no effect. B and C argue that a positive event generates a positive effect, and vice versa.

Participant A emphasizes the importance of the attended guests as they contribute to creating brand awareness. He mentions influencers and “key opinion leaders”, and explains that they consider everyone they work with, including the guests “as someone who could spread the word somehow and expose your brand, expose your product, make you top of mind, make you a preferred choice...you expect when you do events that you get some word of mouth. You put a lot of trust on the fact that people who come for the event have a good experience that they are sharing somehow”. He further describes that the brand itself do not directly reach out to a huge audience, but that they reach out to a greater audience through gatekeepers. “We wanna reach out to a lot of women, but at the end of the day it still makes sense as have it as word of mouth, to use gatekeepers to spread the word. In that way we are not directly reaching out to the end consumer, we are because we are on Instagram and other channels. But a lot of what we do, we do reach out through others. And for us it makes sense, because they become our ambassadors”. B works a lot with influencers, such as the press, rather than with the final consumer, and emphasizes the importance of keeping a good relationship with the press so that they keep communicating their clients’ brands. This indicates similarities on A’s view of the importance of the guest. A, B and C spend a lot of time and effort on the guest lists for events and following them up. C describes actions to secure the guests to attend, which further mirrors these indications. Speaking from the consumer perspective, E discusses that regarding the evaluation of events, the brands should “not just care about the big bloggers and stuff but about the normal people. Even though someone may not have a lot of followers on Instagram it is still one point of view”. At the same time, she mentions that “probably it is those who not are for us normal people, that make a difference”, referring to certain kinds of events.

**Brand associations**

All participants argue that events contribute to brand associations. Participant A describes that it is one out of two most important effects. “When you stage your product or your brand you try to stage it in a way where you elevate it...you will constantly push it slightly towards something more exclusive or desirable or fascinating”. He explains that consumers do not shop because of physical needs; “when people buy clothes, they buy emotions. They buy into a dream or into a universe, or into some kind of value, a kind of lifestyle they want to live or aspire to. When we want to convey or communicate our essence and lifestyle and values and the kind of woman you can become by wearing our brand, the show is a great way to articulating and communicating that”. This is congruent with theories of consumer behaviour, as they include psychological considerations and are not only limited to the specific action of purchasing products (Arvidsson 2006; Sassatelli 2007; Schiffman et al. 2011). The psychological considerations make allowances for that consumers behave and make sense of what they do based on themselves as individuals and by social and cultural influences. A mentions the different senses that the event makes possible for them to use, such as the music. Emotions are a big part of conveying the message brands want to send. You also get to position your brand, as for example a fashion runway brand. Furthermore, he argues that in their case the product is the core of the brand. Associations are therefore not excluded to relate to only the products or only the brand, but this depends on who you are as a brand. B and C describe that a good event generate positive impact and vice versa. D on the other hand argues that a good event generate a positive impact but that a bad event not necessarily generate a negative effect on the brand associations; “I think if it is a very established brand and they have a bad event I would not dislike the clothing I would just dislike the event. I do not think it hurts the brand necessarily. I think it hurts the brand way more to have a bad
E believes that only big brands generate an impact on brand associations, and that events either generate a positive effect or no effect. If a PR event has no effect, then it may be questionable whether it may be perceived as something positive or negative. Consumers may for example see it as something positive, as the company has not tricked them into anything. On the other hand brands may see it as something negative as they did not succeed in developing consumers perceptions of their brand equity. The discussions from D and E indicate that they simply perceive it as a no effect, neither negative nor positive. This is maybe reasonable, as they do not have so much at stake as the brands do.

**Perceived quality**

Two participants, A and C, speak for that events contribute to perceived quality. A mentions perceived quality, along with brand associations, to be the most important effects that PR events has. At the same time he has a hard time distinguishing them. “I think you can always try to add on to the perception of the quality of the brand, of the product. And you could always try to add on to the experience of the brand. I think it is very much the same, if people get a positive experience about the brand, they will also be more inclined to elevate their perception of it. I think I have a hard time theoretically distinguishing those two actually”. C argues that a good event generates a positive effect, and vice versa. B and E argue that events may only generate a positive effect. B describes that it is the least important and common effect of events stating, “you would never stand and say that it is bad quality”. This indicates a belief in that consumers accept what is said at the event. On the contrary, E explains that either the attended guests accept and believe what is said at the event, or they do not. If they do, it generates a positive effect. If they do not, then it does not generate any effect. The latter view is congruent with the theory of Schiffman et al. (2011) regarding that consumers behave and make sense of what they do based on, among others, the individuals perception and learning. These are, in this situation, dependent variables regarding the effective of events. Perception is described as how individuals select, organise and interpret stimuli, and learning is explained as how we acquire the purchase and consumption knowledge and experience and apply it to future behaviour. D argues the effect of PR events on perceived quality is not needed. “The PR event is not really needed in order for me to believe in a brands quality. You can get that information anywhere”.

**Brand loyalty**

All participants but one argue events contribute to brand loyalty. B and E describe it as one out of two most important effects. B highlights the importance of obtaining loyalty from the press. E expresses that it is the most important effect for big brands, and that it generates greater impact on already loyal customers as compared to new customers. B, C and D explain that good events generate positive impact on brand loyalty, and vice versa. D further describes “it is a very psychological thing. So an event with nice people representing the brand and a nice atmosphere will absolutely affect my loyalty to the brand”. Given her role as an ambassador her ability to be loyal may be questioned, however she believes that she can be loyal to a brand because she only chooses to be an ambassador for brands that she believes in and wants to be a part of. The only participant arguing that PR events have no effect on brand loyalty is A, the brand. He argues “looking at the product, you are only as strong as your latest collection. Looking at the event, you are only as strong as your latest show”, explaining that you have less chances with someone new to the brand and more chances with someone knowing the brand. “I think people are disloyal and I think it is ok”. This argument is similar to the bloggers discussion of brand awareness; “It is like your friends. Your best friend can piss you off even more than your new friends because then it is like - ok you are a douche. It takes longer for a best friend to make mistakes that will make you leave him or her”.

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Brand loyalty may be related to the theory of Schiffman et al. (2011) regarding that attitudes influence how consumers behave and make sense of what they do. Attitudes are explained as learned predispositions to behave in a consistently favourably or unfavourably way with respect to a given brand or product. While A’s argument is against this, D’s argument is congruent with it. The fact that the brand perspective does not believe in loyalty from consumers, while the consumer perspective does, is an interesting contrast.

Other

The contributions of PR events to brand equity differ and depend on various aspects. As with the fundamental aspects of PR events, a main dependent variable is the strategy and objective of the brand hosting it. Three participants, the representatives of the brand perspective, argue that events may generate both positive and negative impact on brand equity. The blogger further adds that events may also have no effect, while the consumer argues they only generate positive affect or no effect. Most participants thereby support the brand equity characteristic of that it may generate positive and negative effects. The brand perspective describes consumers to be a dependent variable, while the consumer perspective describes brands as a dependent variable. C argues that the effect is greater on loyal customers as they have higher expectations, positive or negative, as compared to new customers. D argues that a known brand generates more impact than a new brand. Some findings indicate that certain types of events give certain types of effects. Quality events are described by A and C to generate quality effects, whereas quantity events generate quantity effects. Participant A explains that a quality event with quality guests will generate a quality effect. “You focus on a limited amount of guests, but you expect them to then add value to the brand”. A and D explain the “more is more” effect, as the more that is invested in the event, the more effect will it generate. B is the only one describing the difficulty in making generalisations of what effect the brands wishes to generate as he mentions “it is not like we have two brands that are the same”, explaining it depends on the brand and what they want to communicate. Similarly, C argues it is dependent on the objective of the brand. On the other hand, B explains that the more invited people, the more Instagram friendly it is, the more likeable it is, the more coverage it gets. D separates the brand and the products with regard to the effects of events. She explains that the brand and its products are more important than the event, because they are the reason why you attend. Good products outshine a bad event as well as bad products outshine a good event. The same goes for the people behind the event.

Consumers have an active role in the development of brand equity, as they are both producers and influencers of it. Arvidsson (2006) describes that consumers are producers because they are active as they produce a common social place where they share emotions, identities and meaning. Similarly, Kotler (2009) argues that consumers are co-producers of the value of products, depending on how they use them. This is not discussed in detail in any interviews, but there are indications of it. Participant A supports it as he argues that consumers buy emotions when they buy products, and describes that “if I want ordinary women to wear our brand, I need to show them women that are slightly cooler than themselves wearing it, so that they aspire to become those women”. By being a co-producer of brand equity, they also influence others subjective perception of the brand. E explains that going to an event is an experience that she can further tell others about. The importance of the guest is evident as they are often described as sharing the message to others. In a way the guests are considered as to be co-producers and influencers, only that they are not consumers. Consumers are rarely attending the events that are discussed. The participants speak often instead of other groups of people such as the press, bloggers, stylists, and buyers et cetera. Even the concept influencers
is used by A and B. The decision to invite these people instead of consumers have a reason, which is indicated to be that they are more powerful than the end consumer. However, it may be questionable what distinguish the different groups. Basically one may argue that we are all consumers. In short, both consumers and other guests of events are producers and influencers of brand equity.

This may further be linked to buzz marketing and word of mouth, which Morgan (2011) points out as a way to deal with the difficulty for marketers to get through to consumers. E explains that she is attracted to attend, if the event is interesting to her and if it is something special. She also describes that the positive aspects of events are that people talk about it afterwards, as that is where the value lies. Participant A “put a lot of trust on the fact that people who come for the event have a good experience that they are sharing somehow”. Both B and C measure exposure, including social media. This indicates on the creation of buzz marketing and word of mouth, and the strive to evaluate it. Similar to what E is attracted by, Hughes (2005) describes that brands may start a buzz by creating attention with something entertaining and fascinating, which consumers then start to talk about to each other. Equivalent to E’s argument of that the effects of events depend on whether consumers accept what is said at the event or not, Hughes (2005) describes that consumers are satisfied or not satisfied to a level where they want to share it. Furthermore, these types of marketing are effective as the conversation is not paid (Hughes 2005). B argues “we do not pay money for people to come”, and indeed in no situation are the guests paid to come or to take any actions. However, as E is attracted by the free stuff that is offered at the event and all participants speak of offerings at the event, this may not be completely true. For example the gift or goodie bag that C describes that they have at each event may perhaps be seen as a bribe. Especially when he describes that they sometimes offer gifts in the store along with the invitation, as this makes the invited person more forced to attend.

5.2.2 Evaluation of contribution and personal thoughts

Table 6. Word table: evaluation of contribution and personal thoughts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation of contribution</th>
<th>Participant A Brand</th>
<th>Participant B PR agency</th>
<th>Participant C PR professional</th>
<th>Participant D Blogger</th>
<th>Participant E Consumer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>measure by qualitative evaluation “We just trust our instinct and our gut feeling and you know, are we pleased”</td>
<td>Can measure media coverage Can measure relations/feelings/mood to some extent Cannot measure relations Cannot measure by sales numbers</td>
<td>Events can be measured Measure before, during and after Measure by media coverage, responses from guests, attendance, overall interest, sales numbers “You feel and hear its value”</td>
<td>Events can be evaluated Possible to see if it was successful or not Evaluation of the experience by someone attending</td>
<td>Do not know if events can be measured Cannot measure by sales numbers It is possible to determine if it was a good or a bad event</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal thoughts on PR events</td>
<td>“I think it is a very very good type of tool” It is worth it Would like to use it more</td>
<td>“Is it actually worth the money. Are we getting the relationship, the coverage or whatever, due to this event or is it just because we are nice people and we send you email and call you sometimes…you do not really see what you get out from a PR event”</td>
<td>“Events are key but having a clear objective to the event, which taps into overall objective, is even more important” “A lot of the times events are a waste of money” “I hate events” People are questioning and bored of events</td>
<td>“I think it is much stronger to have people come in and present something than it is to just send out a mail about some news” The brands and the products are more important than the events</td>
<td>“I think that the events are more hyped than what they actually are”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluation of contribution

The discussions regarding the evaluation of events differ to a great extent. All participants argue for the possibility to evaluate events in some way. E is the only one who argues that she do not know if it is possible to measure events, but she believes that it is possible to determine
whether an event was good or bad. The rest of the participants (A, B, C and D) argue it is possible to measure the effect of events, however the question of how differs. All brand perspectives exert some kind of evaluations of events.

A and D exclusively speak of qualitative aspects regarding the evaluation. A do not measures in quantitative measurements, and describes it would only be relevant as to relate to different seasons. They do instead a qualitative evaluation after their events, which is a qualitative dialogue where they are influenced by reviews from others, as to learn from their mistakes. People with different experiences from the event contributes (the designer, the Head of PR and Communication, the CEO, and the creative agency they work with), so it is evaluated from different perspectives; who experiences what. Brand equity dimensions are explained to be “parameters that you can take into consideration”. D speaks of the attending guests to perform the evaluation, which is something she has done herself. Who to evaluate may not be just anyone but someone who can do the brand a favour. When she has done it herself she has not evaluated by something in particular, it is more about the feeling, mood and atmosphere. “Be there and feel it and eat the food and see if I liked it…it is very much about the feeling and the atmosphere. It is always about the feeling and the people and the food the drinks the clothes... It is all about mood”.

B and C mention both qualitative and quantitative aspects in their evaluations. C is the most confident participant to believe that it is possible to evaluate events as he answer “absolutely” without hesitation to the question whether it is possible. C mentions that they measure by media coverage and exposure, responses from guests, attendance, overall interest and sales numbers. C also touches upon qualitative aspects as he mentions “you feel and hear its value”, when speaking of the brand associations. B explains that they review events by a media coverage report, RSVP and attending guests. She argues that it is possible to measure media coverage, and that it is possible to measure feelings and mood to some extent by the media coverage. Furthermore, it is not possible to measure relationships and sales numbers. The difficulty of measuring sales numbers is explained by B, as she question if it is the event or another aspect who generate the impacts. PR events may though be linked to the sales as the starting point of a hype, that may be maintained and then result in affecting the sales. The media coverage report is mentioned as the easiest and the most common way of measuring. At the same time she describes situations where the media coverage have been very successful according to their measurements, but the sales numbers have been low. Furthermore she expresses that it is much about what the clients and the guests are feeling, which is described as a “stomach-feeling kind of thing”. In the end “it is really difficult because it is so much in the relation, mood, cozyness, not cozyness and so on. So I think from our and our clients point of view it is all about how we feel when we are attending ourselves”. B suggests an optional way to measure events to be sending a sheet of questions to the press that attended the event in order to investigate the effect and mood. Simultaneously she describes that it would never work because it is not how it is done, and it may harm their relationships with them. To send out a sheet with questions to those who attended the event, is also mentioned by E as a possible evaluation method. Qualitative and quantitative aspects were furthermore found to be considered from the observations. The observed evaluation procedure consists of an after action review, which includes a strategic review describing what they planned to do, what they really did, what to keep, what to stop, and what to start. It also includes pictures from the event and media coverage. The brand advisors opinions of an event include in each event the perceptions and feelings of the guests as well as the general mood and atmosphere, which further indicates the importance of the qualitative features.
No one of the participants speaks of the time aspect directly. The interview with A indicates a short-term perspective, as he argues that “you are only as strong as your latest show” and that people are disloyal as they “do not buy our brand because they liked it one year ago, they buy it because they like it now”. On the contrary D argues that her loyalty to a brand has an impact on the effects of an event, relating it to friends she explains that old friends have more chances if they make mistakes than new friends have. Similarly, it may be interpreted that when brands have a good event it may influence her to like the friend (the brand) more and thereby rely on it more. The interviews with D, C and E also indicate a long-term time aspect. They express a difficulty in linking PR events to sales, as they work with collections where the products at an event may not be available until three to six months afterwards. Although, B speaks of the event as the starting point of a hype, that may be maintained and then result in affecting the sales. Further, A, C and D point out the final goal to be to create sales and all participants spoke of sales, which may perhaps be seen as both a short and a long-term effect. C mentions the positive aspect of the opportunity to create an experiential authentic moment with events, which may add a brand experience that is positive and long lasting. E points out that it is not possible to evaluate events by measuring sales numbers, as she may not purchase the product from an event until a month later. This also indicates a long-term perspective. In short, there are both arguments supporting and contradicting the creation of short and long-term effects.

The literature regarding whether brand equity is built in short or long-term differs. Chieng and Lee (2011) argues it cannot be built short term, Dospinescu (2014) study indicates that it is possible, while Valette-Florence, Guizani and Merunka (2011) argues that both short and long term is possible. Thereby, it was decided to consider both short and long-term effects of PR events in this study. Even though most participants speak for brand equity as having long-term effects, indications of both time perspectives are present in the interviews. However, if PR events may build short-term effects, the PR concept and the sales promotion concept may be more closely related than Kotler (2009) argues. He describes the difference to be that while sales promotion is short-term incentives to create sales, PR is about promoting/protecting the company’s image/offerings. As PR events were found to generate some short-term effects, they may perhaps be described as a sales promotion activity. The focus on other aspects such as experiences and relationships may however speak against it. Kotler (2009) furthermore distinguish the concepts from advertising, which is described as paid media by an identified sponsor. All brand perspectives speak of the monetary aspect of events in various ways, but only as what they are sacrificing. The consumer perspectives also speak of money in relation to PR events, but instead in relation to what they get at events. E is specifically attracted to attend events by free gifts. With other words, there are some indications of that brands pay for PR events. Considering the use of influencers, which all respondents discuss, the sponsor is however not that obvious. However, naturally it is the brands that pay for the events. Who would else pay?

**The participants’ personal thoughts on PR events**

Participant A and D are more positive about events, while the rest of the participants are more critical towards them. A is the one who speaks most positive about events. “I think it is a very very good type of tool…If you look at our brand, the only thing we do to brand ourselves is the events”. When asked whether they have additional events, except for the fashion shows and press days, A answers “rarely. It would be a good idea but it is a matter of resources…It is my personal judgement and decision when we do have all these types of events. So of course I think it is relevant, that it is worth it”. Even with the difficulties to calculate the quantitative effects, A is certain that they get more out of it than they put into it. “All I know
for a fact is that if we were to quantify the output it would be bigger than the input. And it would be a lot bigger. So it makes sense”. However, he mentions that there are limits of how much they can do. Big brands may need other tools as well. D is also mainly positive towards events; “I think it is much stronger to have people come in and present something than it is to just send out a mail about some news”. She also mentions that it is an important tool to impress and influence consumers. Although, she points out that the brands and the products are more important than the event.

B, C and E are more critical towards events. B argues “after the crisis in 2012, a lot of brands were rethinking twice before hosting an event, because is it actually worth the money. Are we getting the relationship, the coverage or whatever, due to this event or is it just because we are nice people and we send you email and call you sometimes. Discussing whether PR events are worth it or not, she adds “you do not really see what you get out from a PR event”. C is the most critical participant expressing “I hate events…I think a lot of the times events are a waste of money”. He describes that his free time is more valuable spending it on attending events. In the same way he describes that the people attending luxury events, have their own money to go to a fancy restaurant or drink champagne. They do not need the brand in order to do that. C describes; “I think there is a trend that lot of people are questioning events, a lot of people are bored with events. Everything you can think of events has been done before”. He further argues that some people in the industry are misguided to think that events are more important than they really are. “Events are key but having a clear objective to the event, which taps into overall objective, is even more important”. Press relations are also described as more important; “I have a greater return on the investment, security in getting exposure, by hand grooming and feeding my press and giving them a little bit of an experience with the brand, than if I have an event”. However he still stresses the experience, which makes the difference between an event and what he describes questionable. Although B and C are critical towards events, they do not believe they will be lesser used in the future. E expresses that she thinks that PR events are often more hyped then what they really are; “sure sometimes I think events are super awesome and that I really got something out from it, but there are also times where I did not feel that I got something out from it, that it was nothing special”. Kotler (2009) argues that PR is a part of the more comprehensive marketing subject. Participant A, who speaks of PR events as the only branding activity that they undertake, supports this. C who argues that he can generate better effects on return on investment and exposure by doing something else than an event also supports it.

Regarding the participants occupation, all but one has professional experiences from events where the experiences are a part of their work. E on the other hand has exclusively experiences from events during her free time. Thereby events may be a more crucial issue for the other participants as they have something to loose, their carriers. This may have effected that these participants takes the matter more seriously than E does. However, this issue comes up no matter what, as soon as the consumer versus the company perspectives are considered. While D and E mainly have experiences from attending events, the rest (A, B and C) have also experiences from planning, executing and evaluating events. This may further speak for their extended knowledge of the negative sides to it, how much work that is needed in order to host an event. Furthermore, A and C have more extensive experiences than the others. A and C are somewhat older than the other participants and have had different occupations within the industry while B, D and E are younger and currently work at their first job within the industry. As A and C have more extensive experiences it may be assumed that they have more knowledge about the topic, which may result in that their point of views weight more than the others. What is interesting is that their personal thoughts on events are completely the
opposite from each other. A is one of the participants speaking most positive of it, while C is the one who speak most negative about it. As their views are contradictory to this great extent, a valuation of which participant may be most knowledgeable, and thereby should perhaps be given more attention, is not relevant.

5.3 Answers to research questions

5.3.1 What are the fundamental aspects of PR events in the fashion industry?

The general perception regarding the definition of PR events is that it is difficult to explain. Only one participant answers with confident and no hesitation to the question, three are insecure but tries to explain it, while one argues he cannot define it and does not even try to. All characteristics (including what, why, when, who and where) are described by all participants to differ and depend on various aspects. At the same time, all mentions that the events that brands have should fit their strategy and objective, which was frequently mentioned as a dependent variable. In different ways all participants address the message, which is sent from the brand to the guests, and speak of events as a communication tool/channel. The majority of participants describe that in the end, PR events is a tool to achieve the end goal of brands, to create sales. By the literature review of the PR concept in the conceptual framework, there were two aspects more frequently addressed; relationship and reputation/image, which are also supported by the findings. With one exception, events are described as an opportunity to work on relationships, which is explained as crucial for the success of the participants’ carrier and the companies they work at. The image and reputation of brands are not literary but figuratively mentioned by all participants, and found to be important from the observations. The findings further show upon the important aspect of experiences. The unique experiences, which may be created through events, are explained by mood, feelings, atmosphere, vibe et cetera. The experience is crucial as it contributes to how the guests perceive the event, and further what the effects will be. The findings support that there are positive aspects of events, often described as a value that is derived from events. While the brand perspectives describe negative aspects to be what they sacrifice in hosting events, the consumer perspectives argues that there are no negative aspects. McKie and Willis (2012) argument of that PR, and thereby also PR events, has a holistic worldview considering the dynamic and fast moving world of uncertainty and unpredictability is somewhat supported. There are also indications of that PR is a part of the more comprehensive marketing subject, supporting the view of Kotler (2009). PR events are related to sales promotion and advertising as they share some similarities, but cannot be categorized by it as they also have differences.

5.3.2 How do PR events contribute to brand equity in the fashion industry?

The two most common perspectives of brand equity were found by a literature review to be consumer based and financial based. Both the brand and the consumer perspectives were found to be relevant, as all participants considered both perspectives at the same time as similarities and differences was discovered. All participants argue that PR events contribute to brand awareness and brand associations. Brand awareness is predominantly the most important effect, as it is crucial in order to achieve the end goal of creating sales. Brand associations are described by two participants as one out of two most important effects. The contribution to perceived quality and brand loyalty was found to be less evident. One participant argues perceived quality along with brand associations are the most important effects, however having a hard time distinguishing them he alludes to associations to a greater extent. Another participant argues the effect on perceived quality is not needed as the information may be obtained elsewhere. All participants but one argue that events contribute
to **brand loyalty**. The exception, which is the brand, describes that people are disloyal and purchase products based on their present thoughts and opinions. The contributions of PR events to brand equity **differs and depends** on various aspects. As with the fundamental aspects of PR events, a main dependent variable is the **strategy and objective of the brand** hosting it. The effects include both **tangible** and **intangible** values. Some argues good events generate a **positive impact** and vice versa, some argues they cannot generate a **negative impact** and some argues that they can have **no effect**. There are indications of that **certain kinds of events generate a certain type of effects**. One example is that **quality events with quality guests generate a quality effect**, another is the “**more is more**” effect. Only one participant separates the brand and the products from the effect of PR events. Consumers and guests of events **have an active role** in the development of brand equity as they are co-**producers** of it, and **influencers** of others perception of it.

All participants argue for the **possibility to evaluate** events in some way, and all brand perspectives exert some kind of evaluations of events. Only one argues that she does not know if it is possible to measure events, but she believes that it is possible to determine whether an event was good or bad. The rest of the participants argue it is possible to measure the effect of events to some extent. Quantitative and qualitative aspects are discussed, both as possible and less useable methods. The brand and the blogger speak of the possibility to use qualitative aspects, while the PR agency and the PR professional mention both **qualitative and quantitative aspects**, which is further supported by the observations. At the same time the PR agency explains the difficulty in measuring feelings and moods and the impossibility to measure relations, while the brand argues a quantitative evaluation is not possible and The PR agency and the consumer notes the impossibility to measure sales numbers. None of the participants describe the time aspect directly, but there are indications of that events generate both **short and long-term effects**. Some participants think that PR events are something positive, for example as they are worth it, while others are more critical towards them, for example arguing there are other more efficient tools to use.
6 Discussion, conclusion and future recommendations

This chapter holds a discussion of the thesis. Linking back to the introduction, the discussion includes considerations regarding the content as well as the methodology used to generate it. A conclusion is made relating to the purpose and research questions. Finally, recommendations for future research are offered.

6.1 Discussion

6.1.1 Is it worth it?

The fundamental issue of this thesis was that companies put a lot of time, money and effort to PR, at the same time as it is unclear how it actually contributes and what exact value is derived from it. Marketers do not know if their efforts pay off, whether it is worth it, and they have a hard time figuring it out. The major role of PR is evident in order for companies to survive in the ever-changing and dynamic fashion industry, as it is important to both making sure that consumers know of them, but also to make the consumers favour you as a company. It is generally known that the marketing budget is the first one that companies cut down when they need to save money, one reason may be because it is not clear how it contributes. As most fashion brands engage in PR events in some way, and want to know if it pays off, it is a relevant problem of which there is a substantial demand to understand. The findings do not offer an unambiguous answer to the fundamental issue of whether PR events are worth it or not. The definition of PR events, including positive and negative aspects, remains rather unclear. The findings show upon great difference, where the exclusively common denominators are that negative aspects includes what the brands have to sacrifice for the event, and positive aspects includes the value derived from it. Representatives from the consumer and the brand perspectives are both expressing positive and negative thoughts about the power of PR events, of which two are more positive and three are more negative. The brand explains “of course I think it is relevant, that it is worth it”, the PR agency questions “is it actually worth the money”, and the PR professional argues “I think a lot of the times events are a waste of money...I hate events”.

The evaluation of events is crucial in order to be able to answer the question of whether it is worth it. The first and most important evaluation component in the minimum standards for measuring PR effectiveness developed by Lindenmann (1997), is determining what you want to accomplish with the PR. As the main dependent variable in both research questions was found to be the strategy and objective of the brand, this may constitute the key to the issue. However, the evaluation of PR events was only addressed in this thesis as a topic to be considered regarding the second research question, “how do PR events contribute to brand equity in the fashion industry”. The evaluation component did perhaps not receive as much attention as it should have gotten considering its crucial role in determining the effects, and furthermore the value, of PR events. The analysis generated overall findings regarding the possibility and methods of evaluation. In order to generate more specific findings, such as how to evaluate PR events, the evaluation could have received more attention such as constituting a separate research question.

Perhaps the question whether it is worth it will never be answered. In contrast to the general idea of cutting down the marketing budget in times of uncertainty, Rego, Billett and Morgan (2009) argue that companies should instead protect and even sometimes increase the brand equity investments, because even though it is difficult to link the marketing activities to returns, the risk aspect and marketing’s role of minimizing it should not be neglected.
Furthermore, Ljung (2016) explains the difficulty of measuring the financial value and publicity of fashion events as a part of the fashion industry, which demands a hype/buzz to keep it alive. Consequently, we should perhaps accept that it is not possible to fully evaluate what PR provides, and give more trust to our gut feeling.

6.1.2 Live versus digital experience

As discussed, the technological development may oppose the use of PR events. The digital landscape has influenced the business; new digital channels has been introduced and changed how companies work within this field. Some even call it the new digital age. Someone that uses the technical developments for their benefit is the Swedish designer Ida Klamborn. During Stockholm Fashion Week in February 2016 she had a so-called democratic front row, an interactive virtual reality show, where robots had the best seat and live streamed the show so anybody could see it on an app (Ljung 2016). If this is the future of Fashion Week, one may wonder what happens with the event when you do not actually have to be there in person any longer. With the sustainable trend, when travelling all over the world may not be the future prospects, this may be a good way to solve it. However, some mean that if you virtualize a real life experience, some aspects are lost in the translation (Ljung 2016). The experience was identified by the interviews as one of the main fundamental aspects of events. It is crucial as it contributes to how the guests perceive the event and further what the effects will be. All participants address the experience, and all representatives of the brand perspective speak of the opportunity to create a certain experience with events, which cannot be replaced with digital activities. The unique experiences are explained by mood, feelings, atmosphere and vibe among others. The brand argues that the personal and physical involvement is unique for the live events, while the PR agency argues “you need to be there to get the full experience”. Nevertheless, looking at a photograph or watching a video may still be a valuable experience for the audience, even without total physical attendance. Considering the common activity of having photograph exhibitions and the “a picture tells more than a thousand words” saying, pictures may still convey something of value. Another example is watching ballet streamed in a cinema. Watching Tchaikovsky’s “Swan Lake” streamed from the Bolshoi Ballet may be an exceptional alternative, compared to go to Russia. Surely, these events demand attendance to some extent, but not completely.

At the same time as experiences are described to be superior live, social media is explained to be a part of creating effects of events. The discussion of making everything in the event photograph friendly is frequent, and so is the social media channel Instagram and the measuring of media exposure online. The live versus digital experience is a comprehensive topic that was only considered to a limited extent in this thesis. It would be an interesting and relevant (considering the technological developments) topic to investigate further. It would be interesting to for example explore how social media change and/or compliment PR events and their effects. Furthermore, it would be interesting to examine whether social media contributes to the diffusion of the roles of the attending guests, considering them being consumers and/or producers.

6.1.3 Different perspectives

With the purpose of contributing with an increased understanding of PR events in the fashion industry, by an open approach, the choice of interview participants included maximum variation sampling. In order to capture a wide view of PR events, five participants having different roles to and perspectives of such events were chosen. Given all the different points of view, a wide perspective on PR events was attained. Perhaps this perspective became almost too wide. There was not a single aspect in which all participants shared the same view,
only by small indications. Furthermore, even though two participants may be categorized as having a brand perspective, they may differ to a great extent. How brands work with PR events differs, which was found by the observations and interviews. Three different company perspectives were chosen for the interviews; a brand, a PR agency and a PR professional. In that way both the starting point (the brand) and the execution process (the brand, PR agency and PR professional) is considered. It would be interesting to further investigate whether the effects of PR events differ depending on whether there are middlemen (such as PR agencies) involved or not. Regarding the fundamental aspects of PR events, focusing on the starting point (the brand) may be relevant. In short, this thesis explored and discovered the topic by showing upon the differences in perspectives. To focus on and investigate one perspective in greater detail may be interesting in order to get a better understanding for the perspectives. Also, it is worth to be mentioned that the results validity from the interview with the PR agency may be questioned. The PR agency makes a profit on carrying out PR activities (such as events) on behalf of their clients. It is in their interest that PR events is a tool that should be used. The PR agency may not answer truthfully whether events are worth it or not, as they only care of what is good for the business. Even though the participant had not a consistent positive view of PR events, the issue may still be valid.

The separation of brand and consumer perspectives, turned out to be more complex than first expected. The blogger was chosen, as they are common ambassadors in the fashion industry, in order to contribute to the consumer perspective. Prior to the study the blogger was defined to be something in between the company and consumer roles/perspectives, because of their business deals of marketing a product, along with their actions as a consumer. This was shown to be correct as the participant obtain characteristics and argues from both perspectives. However, she mainly argued from a business point of view, which makes her relevance to represent the consumer perspective questionable. If the blogger was taken out from the study, the consumer versus brand perspective may have gotten clearer. However, that would leave three brand perspectives against one consumer perspective, which would escalate the already existing question regarding equal sizes of sampling groups representing the two perspectives. Furthermore, the different roles of the people mentioned in the interviews were also difficult to define and distinguish. For example, the findings question whether a consumer is only a consumer, or also a producer. Discussions of the guests’ ability to spread the message of events were frequent, which indicates the importance of the guests and their potential to influence the effects of the event. This may constitute another topic possible to explore.

6.1.4 Methodology
The purpose of contributing with an increased understanding by an open approach considers the absence of a generally accepted definition of PR, the limited literature on PR and further PR events, the fact that PR events may differ depending on various aspects, as well as the inclusion of different perspectives on the matter. The topic is unclear and comprehensive, and with the open approach the strive was to explore and discover it, by taking all this into account. Basically the results were found to be wide and extensive, opening up for more questions rather than providing answers. Considering the explorative research method regarding the second research question (p. 8), this was perhaps to be expected. Even though efforts were made to narrow the investigation topic, this could have been done to a greater extent and thereby provided more specific answers and accessible advises. Considering the great variance of PR events (that they may look different, have different objectives and most likely have different effects et cetera) and that the identified main dependent variable was found to be the strategy and objective of the brand, the unit of analysis could have been more
narrowed by for example focusing on a particular type of events. The development of a framework to categorize different PR event types may be of valuable interest as brands then may obtain advices for what type of events they should host. Furthermore, the study could have focused on investigating one perspective or one of the brand equity dimensions. Extended delimitations could further generate more valuable answers, by for example focusing on a specific brand segment such as the luxury market.

The interviews contributed to answering the research questions to a greater extent than the observations did. Thus, the investments of time and effort may have been better used to carry out more interviews, instead of exerting participant observations. On the other hand the reason may be that while an interview guide was used for the interviews, no specific guidelines of what to look after was used during the observations. Instead all that could be linked to the PR events was noted. The data collection methods of the interviews and observations could have been more structured in order to collect data, which may have contributed with more specific answers to the research questions. The interviews generated extensive empirical evidence, and ended up sometimes in topics that had no relevance to fulfilling the purpose of the study. In terms of generalizability, the interview participants were few. Having more participants may have increased the external validity.

Even though narrowing the research topic and using a more structured data collection method may have contributed with more specific findings, it would have been in contrast to the explorative purpose of contributing with an increased understanding of the PR events phenomenon. The explorative purpose was the reason for having no specific observation guidelines, including the different participant perspectives and the choice of the semi structured interview guide with the open questions. A more narrow research topic and structured data collection method may have resulted in less comprehensive findings and it would possibly not have captured the wide perspective of the phenomenon. The small number of interview participants may similarly have contributed to more specific answers if they were more. However, investing time in interviewing fewer participants on a deeper level, instead of interviewing more participants but on a more basic level, fits better to the explorative purpose.

6.2 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis is to contribute with an increased understanding of PR events in the fashion industry, by an open approach. In more detail, the purpose is to explore the fundamental aspects of PR events in the fashion industry, and how such events contribute to brand equity. The multiple evidence sources of observations and interviews, including the different perspectives of the participants in the interviews, contributed with an increased as well as wide understanding of the phenomenon. At the same time, it perhaps opens up for more questions rather than it answers any. By the study, it was possible to answer the research questions to some extent. By this some fundamental aspects was found as well as some indications of how PR events contribute to brand equity. Even though the questions may not have definite answers as PR events differ and depend to a great extent, the purpose of exploring is fulfilled. The answers to the research questions are the following.

What are the fundamental aspects of PR events in the fashion industry?
PR events are included in the marketing subject. It is a communication tool/channel where a message is sent from the brand to the guests. All characteristics (including what, why, when, who and where) differ and depend on various aspects, where the main dependent variable is the strategy and objective of the brand. The findings point on the important aspects of
experiences, relations and reputation/image. There are both positive and negative aspects of PR events. In the end PR events is a tool to achieve the end goal of brands, to create sales.

**How do PR events contribute to brand equity in the fashion industry?**

Both the brand and the consumer perspectives are relevant. All participants argue that PR events contribute to brand awareness and brand associations. Brand awareness is predominantly the most important effect. The contribution to perceived quality and brand loyalty was found to be less evident as one argues the effect on perceived quality is not needed, and one argues there is no effect on brand loyalty. The contributions of PR events to brand equity differs and depends on various aspects, where the main dependent variable is the strategy and objective of the brand. Some argue good events generate a positive impact and vice versa, some argue they cannot generate a negative impact and one argues that they can have no effect. The effects include both tangible and intangible values. There are indications of that certain kinds of events generate a certain type of effect. The brand, the products and the effect of PR events may be separated. Consumers and guests of events have an active role in an events contribution to brand equity as they are co-producers and influencers. It is possible to evaluate events to some extent, and all brand perspectives exert some kind of evaluation method. Quantitative and qualitative aspects are discussed, both as possible and impossible methods. Indications show that events generate both short and long term effects.

The thesis contributes by adding knowledge to existing theories in the area of PR events, and further doing so within the specific industry and product category. By the open approach, this study draws attention to the unexplored and undiscovered topic of PR events and brings focus to the discussion of its value. The thesis contributes with an increased understanding of the fundamental aspects of PR events and the evaluation of such events in relation to brand equity. Existing literature skip a step in the research process as they give much focus to the effectiveness of PR events. When the effect itself may not be that obvious, which the findings support, the thesis contributes by bringing attention to this matter. Furthermore, the qualitative research method adds insights to the extensive field of quantitative research, and may also bring attention to considering both research perspectives. The contributions may be of practical use for brands that are using or consider using PR events, and want to gain a more clear picture of their contributions to brand equity.

**6.3 Future recommendations**

Basically the results were found to be wide and extensive, opening up for more questions rather than providing answers. With the explorative purpose this was consciously generated, however future research could contribute to the knowledge of PR events by focusing on contributing with more specific answers and further also more practical, accessible advises. Future research could narrow the research topic by specifying the unit of analysis to a greater extent. As PR events differ to a great extent, future research could focus on a specific type of events. Focus could be on either invitation only or public events, or events hosted by brands with a common strategy and objective. The price group of events may also be determined in more detail, such as by investigating luxury brands. Regarding the contribution of PR events to brand equity, emphasis could be on the positive or the negative impact and/or the short or long-term effects. A greater focus on the evaluation of PR events may contribute with more specific and practical guidelines for companies. In terms of relevance in the digital age of today, the aspect of live versus digital experiences is a topic with great potential and importance. Furthermore, the perspectives from which PR events are investigated are another aspect possible to take into account. As the roles were sometimes challenging to distinguish from each other in this thesis, clarifying the perspectives or focusing on one of them may be
of interest. Further, investigating which roles and perspectives are most important within the topic may be considered (including both the ones who host events and those who attend them). Except for narrowing the investigation topic, the methods for collecting the right data may be more structured. The use of structured interviews could be more advantageous and increase quality of the answers in relation to generate findings that contributes to fulfilling the purpose of the thesis.
References


Appendix 1 Participant observations field notes

Thursday 21st of January
Today we hosted an event in the showroom, the first event that I experienced here at the internship. I was struck by the extensive time and effort that was put into the preparations for it. The event was only during two hours, from 15.00-17.00, but the preparations took the whole day. One of the agencies clients had the event as they released a new collection. First we cleaned the whole showroom, we changed the interior so that the products could be placed in the center. The products was also required to be placed in a way that would make it easy for the guests to get good photos of them. We had balloons, drinks, food, prepared goodie bags. Regarding the goodie bags there was not enough of all the products for all persons, but that did not seem to matter as long as they just got something. So if one person got one product then another person might get another product. The employees at the agency were not happy until it looked perfect. There was around 30 guests attending the event and it was a invitation only event. A photographer was hired to take pictures.

Saturday 30th of January
Today we hosted an event for a brand in a store where they sold their products. The reason for the event was that bloggers who had won a competition was given their prices, which were clothes from the new collection who had just hit the stores. The event was held between 12.00-15.00 where the blogger who had won came and collected their prices. The store was placed in a mall, and everyone who wanted could join. A lot of people came by interested and curious about what was happening, where we explained why we were there. There was a DJ who played music and photo booth where people could take photos and get the negatives right away. There was also a company who sponsored with juices, who had a stand where they offered free juices. When it was the most people and activation, when all the bloggers had just received their clothes and people who were curious of what happened came and look, the DJ played and people took photos in the photo booth and tried out the juices it was a rather nice atmosphere. People were happy, curious about the products and it was a nice mood. When the bloggers left and the DJ stopped playing as the event was over, it went back to just being a normal store. It was quite a change. A photographer was hired to take pictures. How many the attended guests were is hard to guess as it was in a mall and people came and went.

Wednesday 3rd of February
Today we hosted an event for a client to give attention to the different collaborations the company had done lately with different designers. The event was invitation only to the press, bloggers, stylists and other IT-persons. With a history of having the image of being a not so high fashion brand, the client wanted the event to make people in the industry more aware of that they are changing their image towards that. They wanted to reposition themselves. The event took place in a big room at an office in the lunch restaurant. The alteration was magnificent. As people ate lunch we were not aloud to start the preparations before 2 o clock, but right after that we worked really hard non-stop to make it all ready for when the event started at 19.00. The agency organized this event along with the client where the client had planned the decorations. When we were done with the decorations the lunch room had turned into a whole other room. There was different rooms with different themes, small houses, lots of flower decorations, balloons, walls, furniture, everything you can imagine. It was a lot to do from the big arrangements of building the walls to the small details as attaching small butterflies under a ceiling. During the event there was models that stood in each room with the clothes like a real life mannequin. During the event my task was to serve drinks and to make sure of that people moved between the rooms so there was no bottleneck. The ones who stood
on the guest list was welcome to come in and you could really see that they were impressed by the event. I heard someone say “it feels like walking into a fairy tale”. A photographer was hired to take pictures. The attended guests were about 70.

**Wednesday 8th of February**

I have now worked at the internship for three weeks and have become more and more familiar with our routines. One routine that I am fascinated by is how they evaluate their PR efforts. Each week we investigate the media coverage from the week before. The coverage of the brand that are our clients. These investigations include social media tracking, online tracking and magazines tracking. Social media tracking includes going through Instagram and Facebook and see whether our brands is present. We have a list of people and magazines that we are supposed to check. Online tracking includes blogs and online magazines. Here we also have a list of which bloggers and online magazines that we should check. Magazines tracking means to look in the physical magazines. When one of our brands are visible we register it in a system where we give the post a certain credit. The value of the credit differs depending on how many followers the social media account has / how big the blog is (small, medium or big) / and which magazine it is. Regarding the magazines the value of the credit is also depending on how much the brand is visible, for example if it is a product image is gets a lower value than if it is an editorial.

**Thursday 18th of February**

Today we hosted an event for an American brand. The purpose of the event was to celebrate their very first collection and that the designer was in Copenhagen to meet and greet her fans. Prior to the event the employees at the agency discussed the difficulty of making the press interested in the designer. This was explained as because her style is a big contrast to the Scandinavian style. They had difficulties to get a TV channel to interview her, even though they did in the end. The event was hosted between 15.00-19.00 in a shop in a mall so anyone could come by but it was only people who had gotten a special invitation that got to meet her. The format was that the designer met the person, gave them an autograph and took a photo with them under 20 seconds. I was surprised by the designers energy to be equal happy and excited to meet each and everyone, even after she had stand there for 4 hours. She had two breaks, but anyway! The people who got to meet her was also just as happy to meet her and when they had gotten their goodie bag and it was over I only saw happy faces. With exception for those who cried of happiness. The attended guests that was given the opportunity to meet the designers were 500 people.

**Tuesday 23rd of February**

Each day at the end of the day we fix the showroom so that it looks perfect, to when stylists or other people come in and look at the clothes. We organize the hangers so they have equal space in between, do all the buttons, steam the clothes when we have the time and do some cleaning when it is needed. Once in a while we also make some changes in the styling of the clothes. Each Monday we also purchase fresh flowers to the showroom. It is really a lot of stuff we do in order to keep the showroom perfect, as the owner and employees want it to be.

**Thursday 3rd of March**

The discussion of the line between freetime/interest and work regarding event came up today. One of the brand advisors is going to an event in another city where the travelling time require her to spend two evenings and one full work day on that. The client who hosted the event did not want to compensate her for the time that she lost on coming to the event, as they thought that it was more of a freetime/own interest case than work. At the same time they wanted her
there, because of her relations with the guests. The brand advisor also felt the diffuse line between freetime and work but felt that she wanted some sort of compensation, even though it did not had to be big. It ended up with that the brand advisor went, and that she was given a limited compensation for it.

**Wednesday 16th of March**

Today we hosted an launch event for a client who wanted to celebrate the release a new collection. The press, bloggers and other influencers were invited to see the products. There was a DJ playing music and they were offered free beers. Pictures from the look book was showcased. The event was hosted between 18.00-21.00 in a place in Kødbyen, which is a hip area in Copenhagen. The place is a showcase gallery which is rented out to different occasions. When I talked to the person who owned it, I was told that they do not rent out to just anyone but that it should be something cool. The attended guests were about 50. A hired photographer took pictures during the event.

The guests are always a well-discussed topic when it comes to events. Before, during and after. Before the event, there is a discussion of who will be invited and then who will accept. As you cannot be 100% sure, the brand advisors are always a bit nervous of if the people that have said they would come and they want to come, will actually attend. Looking at the guest lists there is always people who accepted that does not show up. The question of who should be invited takes a long time to determine. Then the process of inviting them includes several steps; send out “save the date”, send out the proper invitation, RSVP, contact them if they have not answered, send out an “we look forward to see you tomorrow”. This is the most common steps in the process, and usually start one month ahead to the event. An exception was an event where the invitation was sent out two days prior to the event, and it did not include “save the date” and “we look forward to see you tomorrow”. This was discussed afterwards as an aspect to improve to future events, to send out the invitations earlier.

During and after the event the discussion of what the guests thought is prominent. After the event today had ended I asked if the brand advisor that was responsible for the event was happy about it, she answered “yes we got the people that we wanted to attend, and it seemed like they had a good time”. The perceptions and feelings of the guests and the general mood and atmosphere are always considered when I ask the brand advisor responsible for the event whether she is happy about an event that has taken place.

**Thursday 17th of March**

After the previous event I helped out with the after review report that the client ordered. The report included includes a strategic review describing what we planned to do, what we really did, what to keep (what worked well), what to stop (what to avoid going forward), and what to start (what can be improved or added). The after action review report also includes pictures from the event taken by a photographer, which is always present at all events. Finally media updates related to the event is presented, including names and followers of the creator of the update. The media that is covered is print magazines, online magazines, blogs, Instagram and Facebook. I found out that what worked well and what they wanted to keep to other events was the simple settings to the event (with the DJ and the beer), and that they invited “more or less unknown and unusual people”. Comparing to the other invitation only events I could see a difference in the attended guests. This was more underground and cool people. What they should avoid in the future was described in the report to be to invite only 2 days before. From my observations there was a lot of people there. We had a busy time to serve the beers and take away the empty bottles. People were even standing outside to talk as is was crowded
inside. What was described that they should start doing in future events was to send out invitations earlier to secure media and important influencers, and to have some talk or storytelling to the event so everybody is informed of why they are there.

**Tuesday 29th of March**

Today we hosted a smaller event for one client offering bags, released their very first shoe collection. The event took place between 10.00-12-00 in the meeting room in the showroom, which is about 20 square meters. It was an invitation only event where the guests consisted of 15 bloggers. The products were placed in the room together with flower decorations and cupcakes. When we decorated they wanted us to place it so that the bloggers would be able to take good photos. When all the guests had arrived a representative from the brand hold a speak about the new shoe collection. A photographer was hired to take pictures. After the presentation, the bloggers were given a pair of shoes. The brand did not want an after action report as it was such a small event and they could see the effect on the bloggers themselves.

**Friday 1st of April**

Today we hosted an assistant party, where all the assistants from the different magazines were invited for drinks and snacks at the showroom. The preparations was, as always, extensive, and as this was the first time as us interns organized the whole thing we discussed a lot of issues with the brand advisors. One thing that was prominent was that it was important that we bought enough of food and drinks. It was described as important that the guests could eat and drink how much they wanted and that we did not run out on something.

**Tuesday 12th of April**

During the preparations for the press days event, we had a toilet paper situation. The toilet paper was said to be not white and soft enough, that it looked like recycled cheap paper. As it was not approved we had to go and buy new, better toilet paper to the upcoming event. Other preparations included to steam all the clothes, to organize the hangers so they had equal space in between, purchase fresh flowers…

**Wednesday to Thursday 13-15th of April**

During these days we hosted the biggest event that we have during the year, the press days. It lasted 3 days and was between office hours. The press days are hosted twice a year when the new collections are released. The press are invited to the showroom to look at the new collections that are presented in the showroom. This is an opportunity partly for the brands to show what they have and to also get feedback from the press about it. For example if the press thinks that the collections includes too much black. The production cannot be changed, but how they may present it may be. The comments from the press may be related to the looks, price and quality of the products. I was not able to attend the meetings as they are small and personal ones that only the people from the press and the brand advisors attend, but I was able to read their comments afterwards. Some examples were “The prices cannot go up if the quality is not also improved”, “It is really nice, it gets better and better for each time, “the jacket is really nice, I can imagine we will use that a lot” “it is too many basic things, we miss something more wild to the editorials” The wellow print is very nice” “ the jumpsuit and the printed set is the best styles”. So for example if they say that the collection is rather dark, then you could focus on showcasing the colour styles more. The whole collection is not shown at the press days. Some brands are very specific of what styles they want to be shown, and some does not care and let the PR agency decide.
The first two days included booked meetings with the press, where the magazines came one by one. The guests from the magazines differed from one to four people. The last day was an open house day for those who were invited, which were bloggers stylists and other influencers. During the event we offered a lot of drinks, food and snacks. Each time there a meeting was over and during the open house day, we had to make the showroom look perfect again so that the hangers had equal space in between and the drinks and food was filled up. We also took a lot of pictures that they called mood images.

In relation to the press days the difficulty of having several brands in the same event was discussed. One brand sent their look books and water bottles wanting them to be in the showroom. This was out of the question and described as ignorant by the brand advisors. “It is not like you are the only brand at the press day”.

**Monday 18th of April**

Today the discussion of having an evening event or a morning event came up. The brand advisors argued that morning events are preferable as they do not want to take peoples free time. They further argued that this is valid especially when it is a small brand. If it is a big brand then it is more ok.
Appendix 2 Interview guides

Appendix 2.1 Brand perspective
I am carrying out a study about the marketing activity of PR events in the fashion industry. Focusing on the Danish market
The purpose is partly to explore the foundational aspects of PR events in order to gain a better understanding of what a PR event is.
The purpose is also to investigate how these events impact brand equity.
The answers are anonymous.

Information about the participant
- Age
- Gender
- Nationality/country of residence
- Occupation
- Number of years of occupation
- Past work experience

Foundational aspects of PR events
Characteristics – what who why when where
- How would you describe/define PR events
- What are the main aspects of PR events, positive/negative
  What do you give and what do you get
- Who are using them
- Why are they using them
- When are they used
- Where are they used

Experiences – before, during and after
- Job related / non-job related
- Open / invitation only
The process of hosting an event, what happens before, during & after?
Before:
- Why do you choose to have an event? Aim/goal
- Planning
- Expectations
During:
- Describe event
- Happenings that you cannot control, do they have effects, are these important along with their effects
After:
- Do you evaluate how it went? A success or not?
  Effects, meet the aim/goal, positive/negative outcomes…
  How do you know that? Do you measure it somehow?
- Can you say whether it was worth it or not?
- What can you do better to next time, lessons learned
PR events & brand equity

Make room for
Explanation of casual links & chain of events
Explanations of different events (comparisons, what kind of event gave what kind of effect)
Stay critical – are there any rival explanations?

The contribution of PR events to consumers…

**Brand awareness**
- Brand recognition
- Brand recall
- Top of mind (what is first recalled)
- Brand dominance
- Brand knowledge
- Brand opinion

**Brand associations**
(Thoughts, feelings, beliefs, attitudes, experiences, perceptions, images…)
Related to the products:
- Functional/tangible product attributes (raincoat keep you dry)
- Non-functional/intangible product attributes
  Social image, trustworthiness, perceived value (what you get for what you give),
  differentiation/distinctiveness, country of origin of the brand (where the brand is
  perceived to belong)
Related to the brand:
- Ability to produce/deliver
- CSR

**Perceived quality**
- Physical aspects of the product (colour, form, appearance)
- Non-physical aspects of the product (brand name, price, packaging, store, product info)

**Brand loyalty**
- Frequency of re-purchase
- Top of mind
- Price premium (the amount a customer will pay for the brand in comparison with
  another brand offering similar benefits)

**Evaluation**
- Can you see this type of impact that PR events have on brand equity, can you
- Are there any other ways to measure/evaluate

**Other**
- What are the most/less common effect of PR events on brand equity
- What are the most/less important effects
- What effect do the brands usually want to have
- What type of events gives what types of effects
Appendix 2.1 Consumer perspective

I am carrying out a study about the marketing activity of PR events in the fashion industry. Focusing on the Danish market
The purpose is partly to explore the foundational aspects of PR events in order to gain a better understanding of what a PR event is.
The purpose is also to investigate how these events impact brand equity.
The answers are anonymous.

Information about the participant

• Age
• Gender
• Nationality/country of residence
• Occupation
• Number of years of occupation
• Past work experience

Foundational aspects of PR events

Characteristics – what who why when where

• How would you describe/define PR events
• What are the main aspects of PR events, positive/negative
• Who are using them
• Why are they using them
• When are they used
• Where are they used

Experiences – before, during and after

• Job related / non-job related
• Open / invitation only

The process of attending an event, what happens before, during & after?
Before:
• Why did you choose to go
• Expectations
During:
• Describe event
• Happenings that you cannot control, do they have effects, are these important along with their effects
After:
• Did it meet your expectations
• What did you like/not like
• How did it affect you

PR events & brand equity

When you have visited a PR event, how did it influence your…

Brand awareness

• Brand recognition
• Brand recall
• Top of mind (what is first recalled)
• Brand dominance
- Brand knowledge
- Brand opinion

**Brand associations**
(Thoughts, feelings, beliefs, attitudes, experiences, perceptions, images…)
Related to the products:
- Functional/tangible product attributes (raincoat keep you dry)
- Non-functional/intangible product attributes
  Social image, trustworthiness, perceived value (what you get for what you give),
  differentiation/distinctiveness, country of origin of the brand (where the brand is
  perceived to belong)
Related to the brand:
- Ability to produce/deliver
- CSR

**Perceived quality**
- Physical aspects of the product (colour, form, appearance)
- Non-physical aspects of the product (brand name, price, packaging, store, product
  info)

**Brand loyalty**
- Frequency of re-purchase
- Top of mind
- Price premium (the amount a customer will pay for the brand in comparison with
  another brand offering similar benefits)

**Evaluation**
- Do you think that it is possible to evaluate/measure the impact that PR events have on
  brand equity? If yes, how?
- Are there any other ways to measure/evaluate

**Other**
- What are the most/less common effect of PR events on brand equity
- What are the most/less important effects of PR events on brand equity
- What effect do you think the brands usually want with their events
- What type of events gives what types of effects
Appendix 3 Interview transcriptions

Appendix 3.1 Participant A - brand

I: Just so that you know what my research is about, I am writing about PR events in the fashion industry. It’s partially about the fundamental aspects of PR events in order to gain a better understanding for what PR event is and also to investigate how such events impact brand equity. Your answers will be anonymous. Do you have any questions?

P: No.

I: Ok, I would like to start with some basic stuff about you, how long have you worked here?

P: It is my second time with this brand. This time around I have been here for 3 years. Before that I worked at a fashion magazine for 3 years, and before that I worked here for three years. I started working for the company 9 years ago but then I had a break around the bankruptcy, and then I came back.

I: What is your title?

P: It is head of communication and PR.

I: If we start with the fundamental aspects of PR events, speaking of it in general terms, how would you describe or define a PR event?

P: Wow! I do not have one sort of simple, clean-cut definition. But I can tell you what kind of PR events we have. I think a PR event can be PR, obviously it is public relations. So it can be targeted at consumers, targeted at press, targeted at … you know you could have so many target groups, which obviously will define what kind of PR event you are having.

I: From your perspective then, what kinds of PR events do you have here?

P: The types of PR events that we have is the show, which is probably the most important event. Biannually we have the runway show which is mainly targeted at press and industry influencers or key opinion leaders. But at the end of the day it hopefully trickles down through the bloggers and the press and the buyers, to reach the end consumers. Then I think our industry is becoming more and more and more driven by events and by the need for you know people want to experience something. They don’t just want to look at a product they want to have some kind of experience which they can also then share on Instagram or on all these social media. So that means even an ordinary press day is becoming more and more of an event where you stage your product and you stage your brand and you don’t just ask people to come to the showroom for a cup of coffee and show them the collection. You start working with those types of events as proper events, where you also consider ok what are we serving and how are we displaying it and are we having models are we having music… how can we turn it into an experience. Besides from the biannual show we have a quarterly press day, which is mainly targeted at press. We have 4 collections every year so there’s obviously the 2 main collections and 2 pre collections of every collection. We do a press day in Copenhagen, we do one in Stockholm, Oslo, Antwerp, Amsterdam, London and in Hamburg.

So for every collection we do a quarterly event to promote the collection.

I: Do you ever have an event except for the fashion shows and the press days?

P: Rarely. It would be a good idea but it’s a matter of resources. My team so far it’s only me and some interns. I am currently recruiting someone to support me. I think once we are more people we could also do more.

I: Is that what is keeping you from doing more events?

P: It’s a matter of time, man power, resources, and money of course because an event is never free. At the end of the day when we for instance have a press day we spent some money on flowers, catering, maybe models…and at the end of the day we end up spending 5000. So it’s difficult to calculate return on investment per say. But it’s relatively cheap for us to actually make some noise and get people to come and get a bit of attention on Instagram and so on. So
you can do things that are not super expensive. Which is what we have to do because at the end of the day when you go into that whole more is more game the sky is the limit and I mean that’s what you see when Louis Vuitton have an event in LA and they fly in people from all over the world and blablablah. That’s not within reach for us. But honestly we don’t really have any other types of events than the press days and the show. Soon of course we’re gonna have some house warming because we just changed our physical head quarter. I had a press day 3 weeks ago, so that was like an informal kind of house warming because it was the first time a lot of my relations came and saw the place. Our creative directors don’t think we are ready to receive guests yet, they think that we need the new furniture and blablablah. But I think on the other hand we are also a couple of people who needs to just keep business running. We can’t pause all the activities for 6 months until we have the right mirror and the right chair or whatever. But there will be an event coming up, the house warming in some sort.

I: What are the negative and positive aspects of PR events, like what do we give and what do we get?

P: Some negative aspects… I mean obviously all the events that we have from my point of view, I mean I’m the kind of person who mainly decides this is something we’re gonna do. Of course I have a boss who says yes or no, or sometimes he’d say “you have to do the show even if you think it’s not a good idea” or whatever. Anyway, I think from my point of view all the events we do make sense. Otherwise we wouldn’t do them. So if you look at a cost benefit… of course we invest something but we think we get more back in return.

I: What do you invest?

P: Time, passion, energy, money. I think for a brand like us, in terms of money we invest most in our runway shows. Of course our budgets are confidential, but if I could tell you what we invest in terms of money you’d be surprised of the output and how much we actually get as a result.

I: How do you see the results? Do you measure it?

P: We don’t measure it actually. Which is I think is very unusual, that you don’t try to measure your result in any way shape or from. But again I think it’s a very X (the name of the brand)-kind of approach. It’s so tricky anyway to try and quantify the value of media or brand exposure, whether it being print media, social media, word of mouth… I mean how can you measure that… Everyone tries to put a number on it or put a value on it but at the end of the day it’s really really…like you’re guess is as good as mine. We can all just say “oh but one page in a magazine has this value”. But then another people would say no it must be applied by 5 or you know. So I think as it is so tricky to even put a value on it, we decided not to even do it. I think the only way it would make sense is because…you can also just decide ok this page has this value or one apple. At the end of the day, at the end of the season you can see how many apples have we generated, did we generated more apples then last year. That’s where it becomes relevant, if you want to compare one season to another season. One year to another year. Are we progressing in a good or bad way. But anyway we don’t actually do it, we just trust our instinct and our gut feeling and you know, are we pleased. I think it’s also because we are ambitious in the sense that we are never happy, we are never content. We can say it’s good but we just wanna do better. That should be the drive or the ambition always.

Then you can just break it down to a number or have something else that is driving you and I think in our case it’s not really a matter of saying “oh we invested 100 000 in the show and we got an output of 1 million, yey that was an good investment. Of course we know in terms of money what we invest and then again it’s super tricky to even calculate that because what about my salary and how much energy I spend. How about the creative team and their salary and how much energy they spend… If you want to take it all into consideration and then the output, all I know for a fact is that if we were to quantify the output it would be bigger than
the input. And it would be a lot bigger. So it makes sense. For instance a show you do it for more reasons than just media exposure for instance. For instance it’s also the creative development of the next collection even. At the end of the day it’s all down to how much products do we sell and how can we justify the expenses behind that. In one way you can say that a big input is how much money do we invest into developing a collection, employing everyone, having these buildings, doing the show, how much do we sell at the end of the day, do we have balance or are we making a profit. If we make a profit we made a good investment. But then of course you can always wriggle things a bit around.

I: What is the final goal with the events?
P: Selling products to the consumers of course. Any commercially driven company has one goal and that is to sell products, or to make money. So in our case, of course X (name of the brand) as a company is here to make money, to sell products. I don’t think honestly that’s what’s driving the people in the company. I don’t think if you look at our founders when they started X (name of the brand) it wasn’t from the deep desire to become rich or to make a lot of money. I think their passion and their drive is something else. When I go to work my passion and my drive is something else. But lets face it, the company as a platform or structure would not exist if we didn’t make money. The agenda of the company is to make money. So even if I have another personal drive or goal or ambition, when I wake up in the morning and look forward to go to work it’s not because yay I will make 100 000 crones, it’s more yay today I’m gonna do so and so and so which I think is fulfilling in some way. But it all comes down to make money of course.

I: When are events used?
P: Well, to only thing I could say if we speak of it in general terms its really just about when it fits the brand. So when it is relevant for the brand.

I: Who are using events, talking about brands?
P: I think everyone single one. I can’t imagine a brand who’s not using events. Event is a very broad concept, so it can be a pop up shop or a concert… If you look at red bull they send people to out of space, they do crazy stuff to draw attention to their brand.

I: And thinking about the fashion industry, does all fashion brands use events as well?
P: I think so. I think some brands are better at it than others. Some brands invest more money in them. The success of events within our industry is often…there’s a relation between the excess rate and the money you invest. Also because one of the ways to measure the excess rate would be how big buzz you get on social media… Like when you get fed up looking at Victoria’s Secret in the news feed for a week. Then in a way you could say they’ve reached their goal, because they spend a lot of money but on the other hand they get so much exposure and so much buzz. So many opinion leaders within the industry whether it being models, stylists, make up artist, buyers or press or you know… talking about their brand and their products and their particular event. Which in the end of the day, the actual show is about 15 minutes but they turn it into a full week event of castings, fittings, rehearsals, backstage… I think that is probably not that I’m a big fan of Victoria’s Secret, but they definitely know what they’re doing. I think what they do is something everyone within our industry sometime or somehow tries to copy in a way. Because again our runway show, it’s 10 minutes 8 minutes sometimes event, but of course we also try to make that backstage thing part of the event. We try to do the front row thing part of the event. We don’t really do a red carpet, but still that whole thing of people arriving and street style and paparazzi’s and all of that. You try to not just have the 10 minutes, but try to see which other events lead up to it. How can we maximise it. Instead of just having one event of 10 minutes, how can we turn it in to a string of events over maybe several days. So the fittings become an event on social media. You try to turn every little thing into an event somehow, that you share with people. That is one
strategy. Then you have other brands who are like “no social media back stage” and blahblah. Which is another way of then focusing on those 10 minutes.

I: Why are PR events used? Does it have to be a reason for having it?
P: At the end of the day, the main objective is to sell products and to make money. And I think most brands have recognized the fact that you sell more products if you have a brand awareness, and you get more brand awareness if you get some kind of exposure. The exposure can be in print media, social media… It’s basically those 2 things you aim for, because social media is everything from bloggers to the digital media but also just to the person or Instagrams and Snapchats and what have we of hip buyers or models… A lot of the models who do our show they might have as many followers or more followers on their personal Instagram as we do on our corporate Instagram. So of course if they have 20 000 followers then maybe half of them are men that don’t buy our products because they just like looking at a good-looking girl or whatever. But then there’s still 10 000 left and if maybe half of them are actually within our target group in terms of age and money or whatever…before you know it you actually have a couple thousand relevant consumers you reach out through one models Instagram. If you have 20 models in a cast, then before you know it you actually can reach out to a lot of people through all their Instagrams. Of course that is why you start thinking of everyone you work with and everyone attending the show, fitting, back stage, red carpet, front row or whatever.. as someone who could spread the word somehow and expose your brand, expose your product, make you top of mind, make you a preferred choice.

I: Is this especially for the target market?
P: At the end of the day some of these people will reach further that your target market. As I just said, if it’s a model she’ll have a lot of male followers because they think she is sexy, if it’s a blogger then lets face it they maybe have a lot of followers who are children or very young adults who are not really within our core target group. But sure some 13 year olds do shop a lot and wear grown ups clothes, but others they will start dreaming about it and start becoming consumers within a few years. So of course you reach a lot of people that might not be relevant, but that’s not a problem. As long as you also reach a lot of people that are relevant. It’s the same discussion you always have with any kind of media or channel, you always have that, this particular type of magazine has a huge readership, but then if you brake it down it may only be 10% of that readership that is super important to you. Still it justifies working with the magazine because since they have a huge readership, 10% of a huge readership is still enough to make it worth the while. Other magazines might have small readerships but then it’s spot on the same target group as the one we have, which also makes it worth the while. I think it’s the same with these social platforms or digital channels. If you have a huge following, the chances that some of that is relevant is big.

I: What role has social media regarding events?
P: It is a big part of events. It’s very easy to see how within the last couple of years, because it’s not a new thing that when you have guests you serve something. It’s very moderate what we’re offering you now, but pardon my French but we have more important guests from the press or people that we want to suck up somehow, then of course we make a little extra effort. That’s not new in a way. But I think what is new is that you start considering everything a photo opportunity and you start arranging your food, flowers, products as a photo opportunity. Every little thing you corporate in your event, you think of it as a photo opportunity and you stage the food, not so that it tastes good, but so it looks good.

I: Where does events take place?
P: A lot of the events are within the premises of the brand. Everyone is doing these press days or mini launches or whatever you want to call it. We have this spectacular showroom. A lot of brands spend a lot of resources on having a beautiful showroom. We need to receive people all the time, whether it being the press or buyers or for an event, we need to be able to
accommodate guests constantly. So of course we prioritize having a space to do that in. I think that is very common in our industry.

I: If you don’t use the showroom or the company’s premises?
P: Then at least in Copenhagen that’s definitely a trend towards wanting to then find a unique place. Of course you want to find something that fits the brand, product, collection, what ever you want to do. You don’t wanna go to an old jail house if you’re promoting something super romantic and girly, unless you have a very conscious contradiction in what you do. You’ll usually try to find something that tells the story you wanna tell, or stages the brand in a way that you wanna stage it, or supports the staging you wanna have. The trend I see in Copenhagen is that a lot of the Danish brands tend to use Copenhagen as a “the treasury of venues”, like our last show was at Thorvaldsen’s museum, we’ve been to the national gallery, design museum… Every single season we try to find this little hidden gem, which is sometimes not so hidden I mean the national gallery is not super hidden. But other times it’s a hidden gem. Of course again some brands have a very broad appeal and a very direct way of communicating, other brands have a more secretive way of promoting themselves. So I think you’ll also you know how do you balance that to fit your brand is the venue that is very… If you have a very secretive brand strategy you’d probably not be at a grand public venue. But then you try to, like Mads Nørgaard had people to Den Grå Hal, for his one runway show. So of course you try to find something that supports your brand DNA, but I think there’s definitely a movement or a trend amongst the Danish brands of trying to incorporate Copenhagen city as part of the staging. If you look at X (name of the brand) as just one case season by season, all the different places we’ve been, you could say it’s a city walk of Copenhagen. And you could do the same for By Malene Birger, Ganni, Mads Nørgaard or any other brand. So I think we really use the heritage, being a Danish brand. In many ways that’s also what’s happening in London, Paris, Milan… Of course certain brands they are always using their own premises. I depends of course what kind of facilities you have.

I: Could you take me through an event, in terms of before, during and after. What happens before the event?
P: It depends a lot of what kind of event it is. For example we have a press day in Oslo next week, which is a small event. In a way it’s a copy paste of what we did in Copenhagen with this collection. It’s one of those events we do 4 times a year, so you do it on a routine kind of way. The venue is set, it’s in our showroom. Step 1 is to coordinate internally within the company – when can we do it, find a date and time. Does it make sense in terms of all the activities we have in the company. When we’ve found a date and a time, then logistically I need to book flight and hotel. The concept for how we present the collection has been thought out. And again it’s the same we do every season, just as you can see behind me. We always show the collection runway look by runway look, with reference to the show. So you could say we already had a big event that we’re trying to pull into this event. It’s something we’ve done so many times so that conceptual face it’s not even existing because we’re doing the same as we’ve done before.

I: If it is a fashion show then?
P: It’s a lot of more work. Both when you plan and execute, before during and after. For the show again it’s very practical like which date are we having which time spot are we having. When that has fallen into place. One of our biggest issues there is always the venue. Where would we like to be, where is it possible to be – both in terms of budget, practicalities… How many people can we accommodate. Finding the event location is essential and paramount to the actual result and for the rest of the process. Those physical limitations will effect everything else. Once we’ve found the event then we can start planning a lot of things. Of course a show is also a teamwork, I can only tell you in detail what I’m contributing with. While I’m focusing on when and where and other things later on, we have a creative team
focusing on completely different things – the collection and how to show that. Once I have the when and where, then I’ll start looking at who. We spend a lot of time making the guests list for a show. How we do it here, we brake it down to territories. We have one guest list for Denmark, one for Sweden, Norway, Germany and so on. For every territory it’s broken down into sales, PR, and others which will be VIP or friends and family. So we have all these many many guests lists that are being updated and revised and updated again. Also depending on is it a venue where we can fit 200 or 800 people, we need to take that strategically into consideration when we do all these guest lists. Certain groups or certain guest lists can be very big. We can invite 10 000 people and only 10 will come. Other groups of people we can invite 10 and they will all come. So that’s something we need to take into consideration when doing the guests lists. We can actually start working on the guest list even before we have any idea what the show will be about. Then we start working on the creative format which means the part of the creative format that I’m involved in. And that’s the casting of models, if we have any scenography or any creative content in the room. It’s the whole production meaning lighting, sound, benches or chairs for the guest, the backstage facilities, all the way down to do we have enough power, what about toilets, facilities for hair and make up… Later on also down to the things like catering, how can we serve it, what will we serve, what is physically possible. While you start that whole production thing you also start like I said the casting of models. We always tend to prioritize the sound for the show, and it’s also something we don’t produce internally. So it’s also relatively early part of the process is to start considering do we want live music, live singing, electronic…what do we want, who should we work with. Then obviously it’s something I do very close with the creative team because it’s their creative vision, but I’m the person making sure that it comes together practically within the budget. I also have an opinion about the creative output, but it’s not my creative vision it’s the designers’ creative vision. It’s me having to make it possible.

I: How does the invitation process work?

P: We regard ourselves as the Prada of Copenhagen Fashion Week, that we have the same status as Prada would have in Milan. People coming for Milan Fashion Week, they know when Prada’s having the show and they investigate and make sure to reserve that day. We expect that people who are relevant for our show to reserve the date. so we don’t send out “save the date”, we send an invitation. And we send it 2 weeks before the show. We only send it digitally, and that’s a budget decision. It’s not because we prefer do it digitally, it’s because if you wanna do a beautiful printed invitation it’s expensive and my budgets are very limited so I can either do a beautiful printed invitation which I also need to spend money on sending, or I can book 5 extra models. When you’re working with the kind of budget that we are, of course you need to prioritise always. As much as it would be great for people to get something tactile and concrete and physical to give a direction for the show, we don’t prioritise that. When you get a printed invitation you put it on your desk, post on the wall…so of course we don’t get that spin off from it. A big part of the before work is also that whole rsvp thing, to follow up if everyone received the invitation, did people answer back. Especially the people when you have an idea that they might be coming, if they haven’t answered of course you’re gonna stalk them for an rsvp. There’s nothing worse than the day on the show to have unexpected guests. You will have unexpected guests regardless, but if you want minimize it to a small group of people it’s easier to handle. The more on top of things you can be on the actual day the better. It’s really really nice to know who’s coming, who’s not coming, if someone said that they might be coming you wanna know for a fact are you coming or not, are you coming on your own or are you bringing someone.. So you have your guest list as close to what will happen as possible. Everyone working within our industry also knows that it will always change. Regardless how well prepared you have been, it will always change, but then at least you can more easily manoeuvre within these last minute
changes, if everything is planned very detailed. Before we send out the invitations, we would also start working with our hair and make up with our partners. To create the look for the show, which is also a big part of what you see on the runway. Of course you have the physical room, the models, the clothes... but then you have the hair and make up. We work with Y and Z (mentioning 2 companies) on the make up and hair, so we have people coming from the 2 companies that develop what we call a look for our show.
I: Is that a collaboration that you’ve had for some time?
P: Yes. We have collaborated with them 2 a year for every show for 4 years. We also work with Y and Z when we do the look book. It’s their creative team developing a look for the look book. So you get some consistency from our pictures and our show. It makes sense when you have a brand and you work close with someone, they know the brand they remember what we did last time and the time before. It’s not that it’s rocket science, we prefer a beauty look that is pretty clean. If you look at our runway pictures season by season, you really need to be a connoisseur to even see the trend or the development. There is a development but it’s not like we have crazy make up or hair. We are very deliberate about, we want the girls to look beautiful, fresh and natural, but within that there are a billion ways of doing it. We develop that together with the 2 companies. Then of course getting closer we also start to work with the styling of the collection. It’s mainly the creative team, but again I’m very much involved because it’s also a part of how we communicate the brand, how we stage the brand, how do we ensure that if we have 40 looks going down the runway end consumers at least can buy 30 of those looks. Sometimes you can have creative people says “beautiful, beautiful show”, but when you decipher it afterwards nothing is commercialised because it’s all showpieces. In a way a runway show is also communication. So that’s why I’m also so involved in what kind of models we cast, because you communicate a lot through the type of women you portray. In terms of hair and make up, what do we communicate in terms of styling. There are many facets to that and then it’s also because I think it’s funny and I can’t help myself of having an opinion and butting in and so on. But from a professional point of view it also makes sense to actually have not just creative people but also someone with an agenda that is about how we communicate the brand and the collection. Someone who regards the show as communication. At the end of the day, just as you’d have a press release or a look book, the show is a communication tool. And that’s the same for events in general. Another thing that we done before is that we talked a lot with the press and bloggers about backstage appointments, potential features, so we’ve also of course planned that. Another quick thing I have to say we do in advance, we dress all the people front row. We spend a lot of time and resources making sure that the VIPs or the beautiful women front row are wearing X (naming the brand). There’s also a whole strategy behind who wears what, which pieces which season. It’s a lot of status wearing a brand new season that no one can get their hands on. The seating plan is a gigantic puzzle you do in advance. Do you do some kind of gifting or goodie bag or serve any... There’s many many many details falling into place until the very last minute.
I: What happens during the event?
P: When you say during is it then the 10 minutes of the show? Because the 10 minutes of the actual show, that’s the 10 minutes I do nothing. Because then it’s out of my hands.
I: Well take the event day.
P: On the day of the event, which is also in a way which I described, more and more brands try to instead of just having an event of 10 minutes, you try to make it a string of events. So you don’t just have the 10 minutes, you also have the front row photographs, red carpet, people arriving at the show, you have the backstage all day... So you try to extend the string of events. We try to be so prepared so that there’s so little stress as possible, meaning we try to make sure that we have our rsvps from everyone, have seated everyone, have seating cards for everyone, have thought about every single obstacle in terms of who could potentially not
show up who could potentially show up unannounced. On the day it’s not me personally
doing it but if someone in my team, usually my interns, making sure that all the seating cards
are placed correctly, making sure that if we have goodie bags…basically that everything in
the room where we have the show is done and ready for the guests. I spend a lot of time on
the day of the show briefing people, because then we have a lot of volunteers on a day of the
show, we have a group of people of seaters helping out receiving the guests and taking them
to their seats, taking all the battles that needs to be taken of people who are not satisfied with
their seat, not satisfied that they don’t have a seat. I spend a lot of time briefing these people
and try to dress them for the job. So they know how to act and behave and also handle those
situations. I spend a lot of time on that day welcoming everyone like the entire team, everyone
from hair and make up, models, technicians. In a way on that day, I’m the boss for everyone.
So you usually I need to yell and scream and start the day telling that the room is not clean
enough or whatever. I need to unfortunately every time we have a show I always end up
yelling and screaming at someone because if I don’t, it’s something that’s not good enough.
So that’s part of my job too, to be the bad cop. But also I think I spend a lot of time nursing
everyone and trying to for the models, hair, make up…all these people we work with to make
sure that they have a nice day. For instance the hair and make up they invest a lot of money in
us. We don’t pay them to work with us. So of course it’s a sponsor and in that way I wanna
make sure we maintain a good relationship with them. It’s a stressful day but it’s also
important to nurse that relationship. The same with the models, they don’t make a fortune
doing our show. So I also wanna make sure that they have a nice day. At the end of the day
we wanna make sure everyone is delivering, everyone is working hard. But is it a good
atmosphere, people wanna do it again.
I: Are relationships important?
P: Yes, having a good relationship with the press, stylist or whatever. It is a huge part of
events. It’s a huge part of everyone. It would be weird to say it’s not important to everyone,
but for us in particular it’s really part of our brand DNA and identity. We are considered the
friendly brand. I think everyone who works with us does it because they love working with
us, not because they get rich by working with us. That’s an advantage when you have a
beautiful product and a great brand, and some nice people behind it. People will want to work
with you just because it’s great to work with you. So that’s a huge part of the way we work.
You’d not find anyone saying “no we behave like bitches all day because we pay people a lot
of money and then they can shut up”. But it’s really a big part of how we motivate people, not
just by paying them money but also by trying to have a great ambience for the people we
work with. The people not on the pay roll, I think that’s what other brands tend to prioritize,
the press, stylist, bloggers, buyers because of course you could say it’s even more important
to be friendly with them. The difference is just that we try to be friendly all over. We
prioritise being friendly also towards people on the pay roll. SO we don’t just say we pay you
a lot of money now do the show and shut up. We also know that people do a better job if they
enjoy doing it. So it’s all the people working with you, but also all the people you do the show
for at the end of the day. The press, the buyers, the influencers… The networking and the
socializing part of it, I mean its public relations…so it’s a huge part of it. Another part of it is
also to be able to be the bitch, and be able to be the one saying “this is not good enough”
when it’s someone on the pay roll providing something. But it’s equally important as a brand
to have the guts to also demand something from other people working with you. On a day like
that for instance I really also need to be able to say “no I’m so sorry you might come from a
very important magazine but you’re not on my guest list and you have not rsvpd and I cannot
let you in. Unless I decide for some reason to prioritise that person. Especially on a show day
I also need to be very firm and strict and sometimes give bad news to people you’d usually
suck up to because I only have 200 seats and I cannot let in 230 people just because I have 30 people showing up un-announced.
I: Does that happen?
P: It happens every single time.
I: What answer do you give them?
P: It depends, for certain people no one mentioned you will always find a seat, for certain people you will always find a space, for certain people it will be an evaluation of how big is the venue how many seats do we have do we already know that the 300 seated guests this huge group of 10 people had already saying they’re not coming anyway…what is the situation. The more overview you have, the more you can freestyle and improvise on the day. If Anna Wintour, Karl Lagerfeld or Madonna would come unannounced, of course we’d let them in and find them a seat. So certain people you will always be able to find a seat, certain people you’ll always welcome but not to sit, and other people you know it’ll never happen. You prioritise people like that. You have to, because if it was just a matter of saying “come on in we’re opening the doors now anyone can enter”, that would be physically impossible.
I: You mentioned that you didn’t evaluate events afterwards, but thinking of after an event have taken place what do you do? Do you think of the event in terms of it was a good or a bad one?
P: When it’s a show, the main evaluation we get is from the reviews. We read the reviews, we hate they who write negative things and love those who write good things.
I: From where does the reviews come from? What kind of reviews do you look at?
P: There are specifically some of the daily newspaper that do reviews, print or online, but even like the monthly titles that do like fashion week roundup on the website. Or if it’s an influential blogger writing about what she’s (usually it’s a she) doing on the day and what she though about the shows. Of course we pay attention to what people say. When I say we hate the people who say negative things and vice versa, it’s obviously not the case because you wanna learn from your mistakes or whatever. It’s important for us to hear what people think and what they say. We evaluate 5 minutes after the show in a way internally where we talk about what should we do differently, what worked, what didn’t work, what did we love and what did we hate, what didn’t turned out what we expected it to. We also make a proper evaluation, it’s just not a quantitative evaluation. We don’t put a number on the value we generate, but of course we evaluate so that we can do it better next time.
I: What’s included in that evaluation?
P: Everything. It is specifically, the cast, hair, make up, venue, production, backstage, runway pictures, runway film…the process. It’s all the way down to how did it work with the line up in the back stage, was it the right choreographer, was it the right people that supplied the soundtrack who was it working with them. It’s not a matter of hey it was great working with them, we want to work with them again. Maybe if we worked with someone because that made sense for that season, if it was a great collaboration does not mean that we work with the same company next season. But of course then we try to see why did it work so well. What kind of lessons can we learn from the way we started up the dialogue and had the dialogue. Why was is a good collaboration, why did we like both working with the person and the result we got in the end. Why was it a horrible process but anyway ended up being a beautiful result. It’s actually a very detailed evaluation where the designers, me and the creative agency we work with, and our CEO – all of us sit down and evaluate for 2 hours every single detail in the process and the result. At the end of the day it’s the result that matters, but the process is also a huge part of it. Why make a beautiful show if it’s been a nightmare if you can make a beautiful show and it’s actually a fun process. So of course we evaluate every little element, both in the process and the collaboration, and the result. It’s a very organic dialogue, everyone just pinches in, have an opinion, raises their voice. We see it
from different perspectives. I’m not at the backstage during the show, so I have no personal experience from that. So it’s also who experience what. We try to learn some lessons so you don’t make same mistakes over and over again.

I: When you look at the process and the result and everything, and say ok this was not good we should not do that again or that was good let’s to that again, is it only by your internal dialogue?
P: Yes.
I: What about the reviews that you mentioned?
P: Everyone who participates in this internal meeting, of course we’ve all read the reviews, we all have a network of people who saw the pictures and thought they were too dark, or saw the cast and thought they were too young. So of course we’re all influenced by other people. We don’t have a formal way of asking our guests, the press or any of the people who’s opinion could be relevant, but of course I speak with all the press about the show and if I get a general feedback that the runway images are too dark or they’re too light or whatever, of course that’s something I bring to the evaluation. If I through the commercial team get a feedback that “the models are all way too skinny, the buyers didn’t like they were all so skinny”…not that we get that kind of feedback, but if we did we would of course take that into consideration. We all come with “everyone loves it, but…” that they didn’t like the music or lightning or thought the venue was too far away… it can be so many different things that you try to take into consideration, but that doesn’t mean that you never will use a venue far away again, because next time you maybe find a venue that is amazing, it’s far away but we love it so much. You’ll have people who will constantly say the models walked funny or why do they look so sad blahblah. We don’t change that because we get that feedback. Of course we have some standards but to a certain extent we like the way we do it and we don’t think they look sad, or ill or like they’re dying. But we don’t want them to look like they are in the middle of a party. This types of event is also a Chandra (?). Either you go with the rules of the chandra or you deliberately go against the rules. If it’s a runway show with smiling models then automatically you send a message “we’re back to the 80s”. It’s related to what we want to convey with the event. It’s a part of positioning our brand as a certain type of brand. It’s a part of the 2016 runway Chandra, is for the models to have a certain attitude and a certain air. It’s funny because if you go through time you’ll see how that has changed. You’ve had periods where it’s been the Brazilians doing the sexy walk, or the androgynous and robot-like, or the big curly hair and smiles and Naomi Campbell doing her stuff. It’s a Chandra that evolves through time and it’s not as if it’s only one way of doing it, but within the contemporary Chandra we do what we think is right for our brand and for sending the “what kind of woman do we want to portrait”. It’s also a chandra, so everyone can participate in, they understand the Chandra and take part in that set of rules. You could also be like why are they walking back and forth, why are we sitting down, why are the models blahblah – it’s just the Chandra. It’s the same if you go to the royal ballet, there are some rules. If you break them you do it deliberately, but otherwise the set of rules is how to do it. So within the Chandra we manoeuvre and change things and if we break any of the unwritten rules it’s obviously something we try to do very deliberately. I think usually we stay within the Chandra. If you play with the little “how can we change the lightning or soundscape or hair or styling…” It’s obviously all those elements within the Chandra where you optimize or take the direction we wanna go.
I: If we add brand equity to PR events. You mentioned brand awareness, what impact has PR events on brand awareness?
P: PR events have a great impact on brand awareness. If you look at our brand, the only thing we do to brand ourselves is the events. We also have a few stores, which you could say is also a part of creating a visibility or brand awareness. But we don’t market ourselves in any other
way than these events, or we use the events as the generator for collaboration with relevant partners. We dress someone for a TV show or any kind of appearance or event, or we work with a publication for them to show our products or write about the brand. That doesn’t happen specifically at the event, but the event is the generator. For their attention and their desire to use our products or to mention our brand. In a way you could say that the event is our patrol for everything we do. Everything else is just a matter of following up and preparing the next event.

I: Do you think that the event have an impact on brand associations? The thoughts, feelings, attitudes…

P: Definitely definitely definitely. And again the show is a great example. The reason why I say we spend so much time on the sound track, sound scape, music or whatever you want to call it, is because music is so emotional and it sets in your unconscious, not forever necessary, but I mean people who have been to one of our shows, if we play the music I think they’d be like “oooh” you know it’ll trigger something. Lets face it we sell clothes, but everyone has the clothes they need. I’m not saying anything controversial but we all have clothes to cover our body and to keep warm. So when people buy clothes, they buy emotions. They buy into a dream or into a universe, or into some kind of value, a kind of lifestyle they want to live or aspire to. When we want to convey or communicate our essence and lifestyle and values and the kind of woman you can become by wearing our brand, the show is a great way to articulating and communicating that. We can really really appeal to all the senses of the people who are present so that they really really get what we’re about. At the end of the day the idea is for them to pass on that message. Of course we want the 300 people who are there to really get the message. It’s not only the 300 people that we live from. Either they buy it for a store, or edit it in a magazine, or have a blog, or is a celebrity and wear the clothes and promote it in that way. Of course we want all of them to spread the word afterwords, literally speaking. Go to the street 2 minutes after the show and say “didn’t you just love it”. The emotions is a huge part of it. The music is a huge part of it. Also just adding another element because it’s visual, but then all of a sudden you add something auditative I think it’s triggers something else.

I: Is it possible to separate the products and the brand regarding brand associations? Do you think that events give an impact on brand associations for the brand or the products or both? P: Actually it’s one of my big statements to always say that our products is our brand. Because I think with a brand like us, it’s not as if we build a fantasy of something completely distant from the product we then sell. I really feel as if we build a fantasy really close to the product we sell. The story we tell is the product. Of course we stage it. And we use a certain type of models, music blahblahblah, but we stage the product with a focus on the product. Of course we add on different layers, also when I talk about our attitude and our friendly energy…we add all these things but the core of the brand is the product. I don’t think that it has to be like that. I think you can have some brands where the product is irrelevant in a way. You sell whatever, but the brand is about the lifestyle. The brand and the product, it’s not the same or the brand is so much more than the product, such as Coca cola. I think you could have those make up brands where it’s really the lifestyle and the associations and the logo. People associate them with so much more than just the product. But for us the product is the core of the brand.

I: What about the perceived quality, have PR events an effect on that? On the guests or the customers?

P: Of course when you stage your product or your brand you try to stage it in a way where you elevate it. At least to me it makes sense that that’s a part of especially fashion and lifestyle branding, you constantly try to elevate. It’s not a matter of lying. If we have a product that was big bargain and try to tell people it was Dior, I don’t think people will buy it.
So you have a product and you need to be true to your product, but still you want to elevate it slightly. If I want ordinary women to wear our brand, I need to show them women that are slightly cooler than themselves wearing it, so that they aspire to become those women. In any brand, and what we do, we try to stage the brand slightly out of its comfort zone. You wanna try to elevate it and therefore you also, you don’t just say this is us we stage it within what we are, you will constantly push it slightly towards something more exclusive or desirable or fascinating.

I: Do you think that you get that with the events?

P: Yes.

I: Do PR events have an effect on brand loyalty?

P: I would say no. Looking at the product, you are only as strong as your latest collection. Looking at the event, you are only as strong as your latest show. I don’t think that you get loyalty in the way that people would like “oh but the last show that was good so we still buy the clothes”. Of course it will give expectations, but if you disappoint you disappoint. I don’t think you will get benefit of the doubt, or that people will love you regardless if it was a bad collection or bad event.

I: What about already loyal press contacts or customers versus people new to the brand?

P: If it’s people who never experienced the brand before and they get a bad experience, then that’s it. Then they are out of it. Of course people that know the brand already, I mean if you have a store and you sell X (naming the brand) I don’t think they’ll stop sell X because we had one show they didn’t like or one collection they didn’t like. But if it’s several shows or collections… I mean like it’s not your personal opinion that is relevant, it’s whether you feel you can sell it. Of course that’s what’s make a buyer stop selling the brand if they season by season gets disappointed. I think you can disappoint people once maybe twice, but honestly within our industry you don’t get that many chances. The stores wanna sell. The bloggers either hate or love you. They write about what they love. They don’t write about what they kind of also think is ok. Of course you can have some good will that you can add on to that good will constantly and you can take a bit away from that good will constantly, but you can’t take a lot away and then it’s all gone. I think you need to be on your toes constantly. It’s the same with end consumers. They don’t buy our brand because they liked it one year ago, they buy it because they like it now. I think people are disloyal and I think it’s ok. They shouldn’t wear X because we had a great show 2 years ago, they should wear X because they like what they get now… and the brand.

I: Thinking of these 4 concepts (brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, brand loyalty), do you think that it is possible to evaluate them in some way? What impact a PR event have on them?

P: It’s definitely parameters you can take into consideration. It can make sense to take them into consideration. For our sake it would definitely be again like a gut feeling dialogue about do we feel as if… It’s like when we talk about the brand perception… Everyone participating in that dialogue evaluation, we all take for granted, for instance when we evaluate the show, it should elevate the brand perception. So it’s a pre-condition you could say for the dialogue we have that that’s the agenda. So even if we do not use those words or parameters, it’s integrated part of the dialogue we have and it could possibly make sense to talk about. You know what about our brand loyalty, did we strengthen that. But it’s definitely something we do and in our framework it would only work as a qualitative dialogue. It wouldn’t make sense to make like a quantitative questionnaire. Again, we are not the kind of company that have the resources to start making focus groups or whatever to evaluate a show. Of course you do that when you are like Louis Vuitton, when you have an event you evaluate it on many different ways. It comes a lot form the size of the company and the financial possibilities you have.
I: What would be the most or less important effect of the 4 concepts that we talked about from events?

P: I think perceived quality and associations. I think it’s what we sort of stipulate or focus on, because again loyalty for instance I’m like forget it. People are disloyal and you are only as strong as your current collection. But I think you can always try to add on to the perception of the quality of the brand, of the product. And you could always try to add on to the experience of the brand. I think it’s very much the same, if people get a positive experience about the brand, they will also be more inclined to elevate their perception of it. I think I have a hard time theoretically distinguishing those 2 actually.

I: Back to speaking about events in general terms, what effect do you think that brands want with events?

P: Ultimately to sell products. It depends on what kind of event it is, but a runway show specifically it’s also a matter of positioning the brand as a runway brand, which is within fashion or clothing. Any company can make clothes, it’s not everyone who can make fashion. And not everyone can make runway fashion. So I think within our industry making a runway show is really a way to positioning the brand as a high end fashion brand. Because otherwise you don’t do a runway show. I think that’s one of the main motivations behind it. Then of course we can also see that it generates so much hype and interest about the brand that if we were to get that amount interest from advertising, we should spend 20 times as much money on advertising as we do now on a show. So you get much more exposure, good will, interest, from that investment than you would from another type of investment when our product is suited for it. Because of course if we only make white t-shirts and grey jeans, I don’t think we could pull it off in the same way. So of course it’s because the products fits the strategy or the type of event that we’re doing.

I: You mentioned the type of events. What types of events give what type of effects?

P: A good example is sometimes we host very small and intimate dinner parties, which is also a type of events we do. We had one 6 months ago in October where we had really cool crowd, some editors some bloggers some it-people from the industry and it was me and the creative directors. All together we were 20 people at this dinner, which we put a lot of time and resources arranging and down to every single detail like what kind of flowers, candles, napkins blahblahblah. Of course what kinds of guests, how do we get them to attend. What was lucky in this case, everyone ended up having such a lovely evening. For instance one guest even came with a toast and an announcement where she was like “honestly I go to so many events and so many dinner parties and I’m constantly invited out. And usually I enjoy myself but it’s a long time since I’ve had such a genuinely lovely evening with so interesting conversations and blahblah”. So she was very articulate about her experience. But I think everyone shared their experience, and I think at the end of the day that’s the goal when you have such a limited event as that was. At the end of the day you may only have 8 guests, so you really hand pick 8 very very high profiled gate keepers or key opinion leaders who you wanna brainwash. You wanna turn them into little ambassadors who can go and spread the word on your behalf. And I think we succeeded doing that, because of course they saw the product and we had a look book, but that was secondary. This was all about making 8 people love our brand. Make them connect our brand to something positive. You focus on a limited amount of guests, but you expect them to then add value to the brand, you expect them to spread the word. The fact that she already stood up and gave a little speech on the evening is a clear indication that the mission was accomplished. You could say a fashion show it’s on a larger scale and you reach out to 500 people but still it’s 500 people hope reach out to more people. In terms of money we also invest more in a runway than into this dinner, even if it was a very lovely dinner. I think that’s some of the smallest scale events we do, these intimate
dinners. You could probably, imagine vents where you only have one guest. But then you consider it a super important guest who you really wanna treat well.

I: Finally, what are your own personal thoughts about events?
P: It’s my personal judgement and decision when we do have all these types of events. So of course I think it is relevant, that it is worth it. I also think it’s a balance because I mean all these people we are reaching out to, they are constantly being reached out to and being invited to all these kinds of events, and they also get fed up at some point. They’re like “for gods sake stop with all the fruits for Instagram just show me the collection”. So it’s also a delicate balance between…of course we wanna stage the product and the brand, we wanna have these events but we’re all reaching out to the same people at the end of the day and it’s the same opinion leaders, press, bloggers, celebrities, it girls…within our industry. They are invited to events 24/7 every single day. So it’s a balance between either do the victoria’s secret thing where you go all in and spend so much money that you make it worth the while. Or you stay true to who you are. You could also do both of course. But I think it is…people can also have enough. If I invited for a press day every single week, everyone wouldn’t come every single week. So there’s also this, how many events can I have for the same group of people. Then if I start give like a blogger event and an it girl event and you know…maybe that would be another thing. But you can’t just bombard people with events and expect them to participate. I think we should start considering everything we do as events in some way shape or form, in terms of the way we stage the products and the brand, and work with all the things we can work with. But enough is enough. Finding that balance...

I: Are events a good tool, as compared to other tools? You mentioned advertising before..
P: I think it depends a lot on you brand, your product…your budget, because you can have an event for close to nothing. You can’t have a advertising campaign that makes a difference close to nothing. On the other hand if you’re a huge brand I don’t think you could just mark it through events and then expected it generate word of mouth. At the end of the day you expect when you do events that you get some word of mouth. You put a lot of trust on the fact that people who come for the event have a good experience that they’re sharing somehow. Within our industry, the runway show for example is an old type of event. Of course the Chandra evolves, but it’s proven it’s worth I think. And then you have people now starting to talk about “oh it’s an old format, it’s an out dated format”, but still everyone is doing it. I think the chandra, the format, can change but it still makes sense. If you wanna stage your brand…it’s not the same to make a website with beautiful film. The big difference is probably that any type of event, whether it being big or small, you get personal involvement. People are physically there, physically invested somehow. I don’t think you could just sort of transform that into an advertising campaign or a website or something. I think it’s a very very good type of tool. But of course you cannot make a relevant event and invite 1 million people. So If you wanna reach out to huge audiences, then of course you need other tools. And that’s the thing with the super huge brands who want to reach out to millions of people, they need these tools. We wanna reach out to a lot of women, but at the end of the day it still makes sense as have it as word of mouth, to use gatekeepers to spread the word. In that way we are not directly reaching out to the end consumer, we are because we are on Instagram and other channels. But a lot of what we do, we do reach out through others. And for us it makes sense, because they become ours ambassadors.
Appendix 3.2 Participant B - PR agency

I: Just so that you know what my research is about, I’m writing about PR events in the fashion industry. It’s partially about the fundamental aspects of PR events in order to gain a better understanding for what PR event is and also to investigate how such events impact brand equity. Your answers will be anonymous. Do you have any questions?

P: No.

I: Ok, I would like to start with some basic stuff about you, you are 25 years old?

P: Yes.

I: What is your title and how long have you been working at the company?

P: My title is brand advisor and I’ve been working here for three years.

I: And before that you were studying, right?

N: Yes, communications and branding at CBS.

I: How would you describe or define a PR event? (what)

N: That depends. We are hosting a lot of different PR events for different clients. I mean I have been involved in small PR events for only 5 to 10 people and PR events for maybe 200-300 people. So a general PR event you don’t want to define it something like that. The definition of the PR event is to give the guest a kind of a message from the brand. Let them know what you want them to know about the brand or about the new collection or a new launch or anything like that. So the most important thing with hosting a PR event is to make sure that all the guests are going from the event and having an idea about the collection or about the brand or something like that. So it is very important that it is not just a meet and greet kind of event. It is important that the guest gets something out from going there, besides from getting champagne or something like that. And that doesn’t matter if its 5 or 200 people. That’s the main thing.

I: It’s more about sending a message and that they receive it?

P: Exactly. Than just having a party.

I: Because I guess that you have kind of different events…

P: But I mean if you have to make something general for all of them that’s the main thing about hosting an event.

I: Could you explain the main aspects, positive or negative, of PR events?

P: Like pros and cons?

I: Sure, or what it includes?

P: Of course it costs money. And you can never guarantee anything for your client. You cannot guarantee that you have the 200 people attending. You cannot promise them that everyone will Instagram from the event. That’s our main thing. That we can’t guarantee anything. We can guarantee that its gonna be fun and we will attend the event, but its difficult from the other side. We don’t pay money for people to come. You cannot guarantee them actually anything. That’s a negative thing about hosting an event. And kind of nerve cracking that you always have to wonder whether people are gonna come. I know that they rsvp that they will come, but are they really gonna come, or attending’s in general. The Danish press is really into attending something that they can feel the clothes, see something. Either you can play a video or make a special mood in one room. So that’s most positive thing about it.

I: Can you explain a bit more about the Danish press compared to other countries?

P: Because were such a small market. Everybody knows everybody in the Danish fashion industry, compared to in London or Milan or something like that. Everybody in here knows even the assistants assistant. We know that the press are much more visible about meet and greet their friends because almost everybody is friends. You combine a lot of people who know each other. You know that they are gonna talk to each other, have fun. So my point of that was that if you want to make something unique kind of mood its better to host it in an
event. You can never get that feeling with somebody at a mail or in a phone call or sending them a mood board or something. You have to be there to feel the mood, and feel the people around you getting excited.

I: Its very interesting because during the last Stockholm Fashion Week, Ida Klambord had robots front row and you could just see the fashion show in the app. And then you start to wonder where events are going, when you don’t need to be there.

P: Exactly. But I think you need to be there to get the full experience of knowing the brand and every little detail that you can see on a clothing, such as a shimmer, that you cannot see in a TV screen. So yeah a lot of brands are live streaming their catwalk shows but I never think its gonna be that you only do a fashion show broadcast instead of inviting people to see it live. I think that they are two really different things. Its interesting as you say that you can see that everything is much more globalised via Instagram and so on. But you get a taste of it, you don’t get the full experience of it.

I: Who are using PR events?

P: In the fashion industry people who want to say something about their brand or get a special connection to the press. You can use a PR event in thousands of ways.

P: Don’t everyone want to say something with their brand?

P: Yes but if you do not have anything new to say about your brand it does not really matter. If its like “we have a new collection”, yeah you can hold a press day. But is it really something extra ordinary, for your brand they want to spend 50 000 kr on doing a special event? It has to be a special size of a brand to make one o ones as we do in our showroom. To be one of the really huge Danish brands to make that happen. It’s always also that if you are hosting too many events as a brand it can get noisy to the press. Like its “ok you’re always there”, so its really important that you use an event to say something extraordinary. Take for example Adax, they have just launched a total new shoe collection. That’s interesting because that’s something new for the brand, they have never done it before. Or in the fall they created a capsule collection with a Swedish blogger. That’s something new, that’s something extraordinary. It’s not something extraordinary that you have a new collection. You have that four times every year, bravo. So you have to make an event for something that’s something extra, and something that you don’t do all the time. That’s one of the most important thing. You have to have something to communicate and it has to be interesting for the press to know about it. In a different way than just a mail. So its only when you have something new and special to say. And then it’s to different extent what the brand consider as new and special. So it is depending on who you are as a brand as well. If you are a really small brand, maybe its not interesting for you to hold an event, maybe its more interesting to do something else. Do something only for bloggers, do something only for 4-5 people. And that is the beauty of having an event, you can do it in so many different ways. You can take people out for a dinner, you can make a fashion show, you can host a small blogger event when you interact with the bloggers. You can do so many different things to have an event without spending 50 000.

I: Where are PR events used?

P: It is different for different events. You have to make the right move for the event. If you are only 10 people it is really important that you don not hold it in a huge room, because all the cozyness and interaction between people dies in huge rooms. So if you are having a dinner for 10 people it could be great to have a small private room at a restaurant to feel the mood in there. It i cozy, people are talking to each other and so on. So it really depends. If youre having a master show for the Copenhagen Fashion Week, some special point in Copenhagen will be great for it. It is really difficult to say where because it depends on which event you are hosting. But of course the size of the room is actually one of the most important things when you think of where.
I: So what are you dependent on regarding the size of the room?
P: On how many will come. And that’s the estimate. We have the rsvp, but normally around 10-20 % of the people who rsvp yes will not attend at all. So actually a too crowdy room can often be better than a too large room where people don’t necessary go up and talk to each other. So I would rather have 10 or 30 people standing outside the door and they can not come in than the other way around.
I: Can you explain the process of when you hold an event, what happens before, during and after the event?
P: We talk to our client and they have to define what their interest is with hosting an event. And then were making a plan of what were going to do and what they will do themselves. For example I’m doing rsvp, catering, location scouting…
I: Does it differ a lot?
P: Yes. Some of our clients say they want to host it in their own rooms or head quarters and that they want a specific type of food, and want to use the same caterist or florist that they always do. And some of our clients say “I have no idea please do it for me”. So it differs a lot between clients. Some of our biggest clients have forms that you have to use this kind of flowers, do this kind of food, have to be a white location with black chairs. So it’s never the same with any of our clients. That’s the funny part of it. Then we have sat down and decide what we/they will do. Then, if its one of the big ones I go location scouting, I will find 2-3 caterings, I will find florists that have the right material, make a guest list. Sometimes we do also the invite, it may have to be print or send by email.
I: It is a lot of practical stuff?
P: Both practical and strategical. Ok this is the guest list, finding their mails and so on.
I: You said before they have the event because they want some message to send or something. Is that always the case?
P: Sometimes you also do press days for some of our clients. Of course we have our press days but they also have their own press day and I mean there’s nothing else than a new collection to communicate. So sometimes they have really important message and sometimes its more important for them to you know have the connection with the press. There is always some kind of goal or aim, or like an expectation. Sometimes its how many people are going to attend, sometimes its how many are going to Instagram or snapchat or something like that. Or sometimes its how many are going to pick up the story and print it afterwards. But mainly it’s how many do you want to attend the event. For example we may be aiming for 50 people, that would be a success, maybe were gonna turn out 25 or 45, but I mean if were 20 that’s not good enough. We always estimate, in collaboration with the brand, how many we think is possible to have there. And that’s depending on what the message is. Is it something really new, extraordinary new or is it just a press day. We make the estimate of how many will attend after that. So that’s a stomach feeling kind of thing.
I: What happens during the event?
P: Keep everyone happy. Mingling. Maybe checking out the guest list. Were always there at least 2 hours before to check that the catering as arrived, that the location is perfect and so on. Standing at the door checking people out.
I: Is the mingling thing important?
P: That’s the main thing. Especially because were called personal relations. So its really extremely important that you take the time to go around and talk to every single one of the guests. And also getting some feedback on the event from them at the same time. So you can go back to your client and say they really liked it. Or maybe next time we should think about this or something.
I: What do you do after the event?
P: That differs. Some people wants a social media report after the event. And want to define
how many of the guests did rsvp, how many actually came, how many of the persons there
Instagrammed, how many Instagrammed on their private Instagram versus the media… Like
if Elle attended did the person representing Elle Instagrammed on elle.dk or was it at her
private Instagram profile. That’s the most normal kind of way of doing it. For example also if
elle.dk took the story and printed it on print. That’s also of interest… so online coverage.
I: Has it happened sometime that the brand measured it some other way?
P: Not with my clients. No its always with the coverage afterwards. Somebody also we had
some make up or beauty brands that wanted two months afterwards, they wanted to see, ok
they got a goodie bag, how many actually used them on their blog. But its kind of the same
thing, but not really. Its still online coverage. We have never experienced someone who did it
another way of what I can recall. Its not out there, a way to measure it, but the collection you
show on the press will not be in the stores before 3-6 months afterwards. So it’s difficult to
make that direct link between the PR event and the sales. But also it’s much more about the
client and their feeling about it. Were they happy, were people talking to them, were they a
general good vibe in the room, stuff like that. I think that’s the main thing for them to know.
Trying to be there and feel how people are feeling. And a lot of our clients don’t even really
want an coverage report afterwards. It depends on the size of the event.
I: How?
P: If it’s something really small, and if they tag them online they can see themselves. But I
always do it as an extra thing. It’s also nice for 9PR to have that kind of coverage afterwards.
I: Does the represents from the brands usually attend the event themselves?
P: Always and that’s really really important. Sometimes I’m their person out there but I’m not
their brand. You have to have the designer or marketer or PR manager or anybody from the
brand is the brand. Because I’m just a mini part of the brand out in the field. So its really
really important when we host an event that they have as many people, the whole team for
that matter, can be there to explain people about their idea and the background and all that. So
that’s really important.
I: So if we add brand equity to the perspective, what does a brand search for to effect? You
said before that they want to send a message, but what effect do they want from that message?
P: They want to be remembered. They want to be unique, and to have something else than
anybody else. They want to be top of mind. So every single time the Danish press are thinking
like ok this month we’re doing something print…oh that’s right we attended an event last
week where that brand did print all over, we have to get some of that. So you can say, it’s a
really fine line of communicating too much versus too less. So its like you have to
communicate and brand yourself through PR in the right amount. If you communicate too
much with the press they get annoyed and kind of like omg its you again, and if you do it too
less its like they have no idea of who you are. So you have to be in between those two fields.
I: How many events are too less or too many?
P: It depends on the size of the brand. One client for example are hosting an event for each
fashion week, that’s two times a year. Another client are having an event when they need to,
when they have something new to communicate. It may be that they don’t host an event for a
year, and then two within 6 months. Some of the biggest clients we have are having an event
once a month. So it really depends. And it’s not necessary that it’s the same group of people
there each time. Because if you invite somebody to an event every single month, it doesn’t
matter if its Louis Vuitton, Gucci you name it, people are going to be so annoyed about it
because they have to you know rsvp, they have to attend some of the times and choose if it is
the right time this time to attend or if they should do it next month. So it really depends on the
size of the brand and how many stories they have to tell the press. So again its such a fluffy
definition.
I: What is the most important effect that brands want with a PR event, if you think of brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty?
P: Brand awareness and brand loyalty. When you host an event you also need to get some loyalty from the press. That they are going to continue communicating the brand. You always host an event to keep that relationship going in the future. So I think that brand loyalty and brand awareness is the most important thing with hosting an event.
I: How may the effect look like?
P: Well, depending on the event the impact will be either good or bad.
I: What about brand associations, do the events that you have been hosting have an affect on peoples thoughts, feelings, beliefs, attitudes, experiences, perceptions, images of the product and/or the brand?
P: Well yes I think the events do have an effect on that. But it is not an equal important effect as the other two. Sure the event is very much about the guests feelings and attitudes and such, both towards the products and the brand. So yes it do have an effect on that.
I: Depending on if it is a good or a bad event, how do that effect look like?
P: Well speaking about in in general terms, if it is a bad event, then it has a negative impact on those things. And if it is a good event it has a good impact.
I: What about the perceived quality of the products? Do events have an impact on that?
P: Not in general I think. Unless that is the purpose of the event where the focus is to send the message of the quality of the products, and you maybe have someone talking about the quality. Then yeah sure it will have an effect.
I: This sounds like a positive effect, is it possible with an event to create a negative effect regarding the quality?
P: No…not really.
I: How is that?
P: Well, I think that the general impact from the type of an event that I described, would be positive. You’d never stand and say that it is bad quality. But I think that the quality is the least important concept of the 4.
I: Can you see a trend of what effect the brands want to have?
P: I think after the crisis in 2012, a lot of brands were rethinking twice before hosting an event, because is it actually worth the money. Are we getting the relationship, the coverage or whatever, due to this event or is it just because we are nice people and we send you email and call you sometimes. So I really think after the crisis a lot of our brand rethinking, ok maybe we should rethink the whole champagne oyster thing all that all the time. But I don’t see a special trend… its not like we have two brands that are the same. So again with the it depends on which brands and what they want to communicate. So I don’t see any kind of trend of what they want to communicate about themselves.
I: Can you explain a bit more about that “is it worth it”?
P: It is hard when you don’t really see what you get out from a PR event. But that’s in general with PR, its difficult because you don’t necessary have a value that you can just put something under and say we are worth 2 million dollar or something like that. Because again with the personal relation its much more about who we talk to, how we talk to them, do we say happy birthday we see them because we know they have just had their birthday, or were talking about their sick child because last time they were here they told us their kid was sick. And I think you cant measure good relation between two people. You can measure how its getting out through my work to their work. But I can measure that I have to have some special value each Friday when we have our Friday meeting. I have some goals … ok this brand has to get this much clippings, was it better or worse last week versus the year before. So you can measure my work but you cant measure the personal relation between me and the press. And
that is the fluffy part of PR events, that you can't measure it the same way that a sales department can measure how much they sold last week.

I: What can you then measure?

P: The coverage. If you want some numbers, that's the easiest way to do it.

I: You mentioned before the feelings and mood and such… is that something you can measure?

P: Well it is partly shown in the media coverage, but not fully.

I: What is the most evident connection/effect between PR events and brand equity?

P: Brand awareness.

I: Can you say what type of event gives what type of effects?

P: If you measure it through the coverage. The more Instagram friendly you make an event, the more people will Instagram the event. And the more people you invite, the more people will automatically Instagram the event. That's what I have seen. If you measure the Instagram moments of the Instagram posts, the more likeable the room or the collection or the food is, the more are going to Instagram the event. So I think if you have a really dark room with bad lightning and lousy ways where you can't get a good picture nobody will do it, and that can be any great brand that host an event but if you can't make a great picture you're not gonna post it. It's really awful, but if you don't make the event likeable for the bloggers and the press in general they're not going to post it. The brand awareness will be zero. Because I can't measure anything afterwards if I don't get my posts. It's really strange to talk about it because it's all in your head. So when you talk about all these things its like … its really difficult to say it out loud. You know it, but you have to explain to other people what's going on in your head.

I: From the brands point of view, what do they see as important in terms of effects?

P: Of course the sales is important, but you can't measure anything directly because we're working in seasons. So the styles that we're working with now will come out in 3-6 months. Nobody takes that line and estimate it from the event to the end consumer. But if you start out a hype at the event. And the next hype will come on print, the print media. And again afterwards the hype go through to the online magazines and then again when the styles are coming in the shops and you're making a hype again with bloggers for example. You can actually maintain the hype for quite some while. If it's a special print or a special colour or something that everyone in the press and bloggers and so on are wearing, then the end consumer will maintain the hype it until they can receive it or buy it in the shop. For example if you're starting out with hosting a show, and afterwards are only gifting the top 5 people on the Danish market, some of the really really important influencers with the styles. And then you move forward to the magazines, you can actually maintain that hype all through. But its again difficult, is it in the event or is it the influencers or anything that happen in between that is the cause. But the event is always the beginning of the hype line. But again its difficult to say it is, or it isn’t. Maybe, maybe not. But then of course it has happened that a brand have a lot of online coverage, and that we made a really good job according to the coverage measurements, but then the brands sales numbers have been low. You have not been able to see that change on the sales numbers as the online coverage.

I: Talking about measuring with the media coverage, do you see that there might be some other way of evaluating or measuring a PR event?

P: Its never gonna happen, but you could send out a sheet of questions to the press that attended the event. Did you like the food, did you like the location, did you like the collection, what did you not like about the collection, which 3 colours were the main colours in the collection to investigate if they actually saw it or if they just had a nice time... I think that would be the best way to find out what effect the event had on the press. But again with the personal relation it would be catastrophically to send out a sheet like that because the press
would be like what the fuck. But I think that could be a way to find out what the actually effect or mood of the event was.
But to do something that you could do, I have no idea besides tracking the Instagram, and so on. It’s really difficult because it’s so much in the relation, mood, cozyness, not coyness and so on. So I think from our and our clients point of view it’s all about how we feel when were attending ourselves.
Appendix 3.3 Participant C - PR professional

I: Just so that you know what my research is about, I’m writing about PR events in the fashion industry. It’s partially about the fundamental aspects of PR events in order to gain a better understanding for what PR event is and also to investigate house such events impact brand equity. Your answers will be anonymous. Do you have any questions?
P: No.
I: Ok, I would like to start with some information about you, you are from Australia right?
P: Yes, but I’ve worked and lived in Japan, Copenhagen, Sri Lanka.. and now I live in Hong Kong.
I: What have you been working with?
P: I started at the shop floor, and then I worked my way up so I’ve been working with brand development, brand positioning.. and now I’m teaching.
I: How would you describe or define a PR event?
P: PR events are an aspect of the marketing strategy. And I think it’s very very important that it’s strategically driven, which kind of relates to the brand, which then relates to the business objectives, and then relates to having a return on investments. So I think that it needs to be clearly set in place first that PR events, PR along with advertising along with digital along with all these different avenues, are mere channels of communicating the strategy and the purpose of the brand full stop. I think a lot of people in the industry, a lot of PR agencies, get misguided to think that events, and suddenly the PR aspect of it, is more important than they really are, hence the inflated prices. Personally my professional career always avoided using PR agencies to run my events. So the events are key but having a clear objective to the event, which taps into overall objective, is even more important. And with that is having measurable targets. So what exactly are we measuring this excess of event on. Is it attendance, is it RSVP, is it actual purchases, or is it brand inception, is it sales… It’s all these different measurable elements that should be in place prior to the event, and should be part of the formulation of why we’re doing a PR event.
I: With a PR event, what do you give and what do you get in general…such as positive and negative aspects?
P: In general, there are a few good factors with doing a PR event. It’s very hard to execute very good PR events. From the events you generate PR. And we’re looking predominantly at luxury events, so having worked with the luxury brands (naming some examples) in Scandinavia, it was very very hard for them to trust myself but also trust even agencies to really implement and execute a very high level event. They also are very critical about the deliverables and critical about targets and return on investments. In the end it’s about sales. So why are we doing this, what do we put into it and what are we getting out of it. But to go back to your question, the positive for a guest is the definite feel good factor, the launch (?) element, there’s the contact to your client which is key. A lot of the key words that we use in the strategy these days is about experiential authentic moments. So these moments are when we can encounter our clients, when can the client encounter the brand. And obviously through doing events like this these are the types of moments that are positive and long lasting. Have the brand in mind for these clients. So just adds another dimension to the brand experience. The negatives are for long time, and I this think to date, Its hard to get the quality. Quality versus quantity is a big factor.
I: Can you develop further what you mean with quality?
P: Quality of guests to ensure that you get the right guest coming. And when I say the right guest, it’s the right guest according once again to your objective. So are they A) the right to tweet and Instagram and promote your brand, and B) the right guest to grow in your database, or C) the right guest to actually make the purchase of your products that you expose them to.
The mix is key, but I think this is where, if I think about the different markets I’ve been involved in….this is very different from market to market. So in Denmark we don’t have this culture of lists as you would in the Middle East or in Hong Kong. In Dubai you can pay up to a good 20,000 dollars for a list. And this is a list of you know say high network individuals that you pay the agency to secure for you. Knowing very well that all on the list that you pay, you get a 100% attendance. You pay the money and you get, say whatever you make the agreement on lets say its 150 of the right people with the right mix, then these people will come along. And it’s the hope that this list will actually generate sales.

I: How can they be sure that the guests are gonna come?
P: That’s because you work with a PR agency, it’s the PR agency that holds the relationship. It’s a big business in The Middle East and Honk Kong. In Dubai you don’t have these lists culture with the PR agencies.

I: And in Copenhagen?
P: Yeah no. PR agencies in Scandinavia do more with press relations than with client relations.

I: Just to get that clear, when you work with PR events, are you hired by the company as a freelancer or how does that work?
P: So I’ve been involved in all sides. I’ve had to organized my events, I’ve had to contract to others, I’ve had then been contracted to host, organize and produce events for other people. So I’ve been on all aspects of it.

I: Who are using events?
P: Who uses PR events in their marketing strategy?

I: Yeah.
P: Most brands. I think its more about how you use the event and how the event plugs into the strategy. There are a lot of brands, where it’s a part of their strategy to have a lot of events. Lets say the younger more commercial brands like urban outfitters. They have some sort of activations / events almost every month, but that’s very much part of their DNA. Where’s the high luxury brands are limited, they don’t like to overdo it so you might be lucky that you might have one event per year. If they’re lucky.

I: So you could say that brands are using events because if it fits with their DNA?
P: Yeah, but if it fits with their strategy. So events can be a component of the DNA, but it would be more of a component of their strategy. So like Diesel is a very good example. Diesel have a lot of events. And they have events at least (and we’re talking not luxury but they spend a lot of money on their brands), and there are sponsor events or they host events or so, they’re doing at least four events a year, key to their collections.

I: When are events used?
P: Predominantly it’s for celebration or for launch component. So you’re speaking of Gucci or Bottega or Burberry, when we did large scale events it was for you know the 150th anniversary or the 85th anniversary or it was for the creative director visiting Copenhagen who was for a high level aspect. Or it was for the launch of a new product.

I: Where are events used?
P: In terms of actual location wise… Well, It also depends once again back to the strategy but there’s a trend right now to do a lot of off site events, no to do it at the store. It’s to take the client outside the store environment to take them to a restaurant or a gallery. Much more of a cultural spot of interest. With Burberry we hosted a number of dinners, so I’d have to be at the most in restaurant at the time where it would be hard for people to get a reservation, where you’d do a dinner event with Norma as an example. Whereas in Honk Kong you really find that there’s a split between doing in store events with champagne and canapés (that’s for your VIP group too) and then for your first VIP group you do a dinner with them, the top 20 customers.
I: Could you take me through an event, what happens before, during and after the event?
P: The general format obviously is always the invitation. You always want to do a 4 week “reserve/book the date”, 4 weeks prior to the event. Closely followed by the week after, 3 weeks ahead, you send out an invitation which in itself should be something unique and memorable. That they’re gonna actually wanna open them an read, followed by call up confirmation that they received their invitation and weather they would come or not.
I: How do you do the invitation memorable?
P: So you’d save a date which is generally e-format in hope that they reserve the date. Then a week after you do a hard copy invitation, usually printed, os it’s a beautiful gold print or something with a gift maybe.
I: So sending an email is not really an option?
P: No, not when we’re talking luxury. And then, if you haven’t received the confirmation of save the date or confirmation rsvp on the invite, you follow up with a call. Sometimes you can also have a call to action on the invitation, so for example on the save the date you might ask them to come into the store as a gift awaits them along with their invites so they are incentivised to come to the store. And then once they’re there it’s harder for them to get out of the event because you have that face to face contact. So you’d advise them and they’d be more inclined to come and they also got a gift, and they are less inclined to cancel or not to show up because they’ve had the contact. So that’s prior the event.
I: Do you also have some kind of goal with the event?
P: Of course! But that’s what I said, that you take that all the way back to the beginning of the year. So in the beginning of the year when you start planning your strategy, you’ll know that within this strategy and plan of the year you have x amount of launches, x amount of budget, x amount of objectives to be achieved. From that point, this is the planning you’d do in November for the strategy that would come out in January. And then according to that planning you’d know clearly where your 2 key events take place, or 3 or 4. And then you know how much money you got to deal with. Then you also plan, not in the beginning of the year but plan where it will take place, what should we offer and so on. Thinking about Scandinavia you’d focus much more on…your events taking place in September/October/November, period. That’s the key event period, and the reason for that is the collections. There’s a greater focus on the AW collections than SS collections. Obviously because your outerwear pieces, jackets, costs more money and you make more money on it. So there’s always a commercial aspect of it. Your spring, from January you tend to have the sales period so you’d never do an event there. And then February you have new collections, but they’d be SS pieces so that’s less important. Then that’s the kind of planning beforehand and then when it comes down to it, you generally always do an event on a Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday.
I: Why?
P: In terms of days. Fridays are always very personal. It’s harder to secure a person on a Friday given there’s the weekend and they might be travelling or you know. Yes you can, there’s no golden rule, but from experience, we always know that it’s always better to do an event on a Tuesday or Wednesday. It’s the middle in the week, it’s something good to fill up your calendar with. In Denmark you don’t wanna do an event too late because what happens is people finish work around 5 o clock, so you don’t want to keep them waiting too long around town. But then again you don’t want them to go home, so if you schedule an event 8 pm, meaning that if you are inviting the top CEO of a bank to attend your event and he’s to be in the office, you don’t want to keep him to stay in the office from 5 until 8. So you always wanna do your events a little bit earlier, around 6 to seven. Then depending if you’re doing an in store event, mosts event that we did in Denmark we’d start around 6 when the shop shut officially and then it’d be a closed door event, meaning of course invite only, and you’d serve
champagne, canapés… The format is yeah champagne, canapés, you wait to most of the
guests to arrive, you give them about 30-45 minutes, you’d have some sort of talk or welcome
to your guests explaining why’s that we’re here and why’s that we’re having an event. So it
could be a new collection, the ladies look, the gentlemen’s look, and then they receive some
sort of incentive to maybe purchase something, that they receive a discount for that night only
or they get a bonus for that night only. Then you give them some sort of gift, you always give
them a goodie bag. That’s the general format. Of course doing a dinner you might then
schedule the dinner after that. So then you would go to the dinner at a fine restaurant, but once
again like I said dinners are difficult because you’re gonna make sure that the group of people
that you take there know each other. Or you’re working through a third party print partner,
like a magazine, that’s something that we often do. So you’d be like Gucci and you wanna
host a dinner for 20 fabulous ladies. And then of course you’d always wanna have good
representation from your top sales persons present with you at the whole time, so you’d have
your top sales guys to help to co-host the party and mingle and network with the guests. Then
it’s always important to have a star factor, there has to be something good about the event.
That there’s the creative director or it’s the first time exclusive…there need to be something,
there has to be a wow factor, a draw card for them to be there.
I: Could it be anything?
P: Well, something unique. So to throw an event for the sake of throwing an event is like
throw money out the window, there’s no point to it. You need to have something special. And
I think to be quite honest, I think there’s a trend that lot of people are questioning events, a lot
of people are bored with events. Everything you can think of events has been done before. So
you really gonna be creative or incentivise your guest to wanna come to you event. It’s no
longer an incentive enough for just inviting and serving champagne, now it has to be
champagne, invitations, goodie bags, wow factor, dinner, gifts…all in a hope that your
objectives are met.
I: What happens after the event? Can you say that it was a success or not, do you evaluate or
measure it?
P: Absolutely. Obviously because you set out certain objectives in the beginning of the year,
and the objectives are either PR exposure, database acquisition, clientele, sales…so you have
some set targets in place and you measure it about that. Of course attendance overall, then you
can look at measures within exposure. So when you talk about editorial coverage so the press
were invited. In Scandinavia there’s a tendency to always mix press and guests together
asopposed to other countries where you wouldn’t. You’d specialize having different events
for different groups. Then you’d look at the PR for example, look at how many hashtagged
the event, how many images were they on social media about the event, what was the overall
feedback. You want to measure the buzz exactly. Media coverage…PR as one measureable
target.
I: Based on that can you say that it was worth it or not? Thinking of the time and money you
spend?
P: Of course. Because you’d have those set in place beforehand.
I: How much it costs and what you get?
P: Yeah, when you’re doing the planning for an event you’d be planning a budget and put in
place your proposal as why you wanna do an event and within that you have your targets. For
example we’re doing this event because we want to increase exposure, brand exposure, brand
presence, how much brand presence, how can we measure brand presence, sales, how much
sales do we want to try generate realistically… We should have all those things set in place
before.
I: If we add brand equity to the picture, what effects PR events have on brand equity.
When you’ve hold a PR event, what impact has the events on consumers’ brand awareness?
P: You can measure brand awareness through coverage, media coverage. You can also measure it through overall interest to the event. When you do these events they are limited to a number of people attending, so what happen a lot of the times when you build up this hype around the event you find that a lot of people will come into the store that weren’t invited seeking invitations, wanting to be invited. This is ironically, this is actually a measure of how successfully your event is because you generate additional interest of people who weren’t invited but were got around town, so that’s a good thing. Then of course like a said social media plays an important part because now it’s all about the moment, recording myself and connecting myself to the moment through hash tags or through those 15th seconds of videos of “here I am at the Gucci party”.

I: Can you see some change in the brand associations, thoughts feelings attitudes towards the products and the brand?

P: Absolutely. If it was a success.

I: When do you see this impact?

P: You see it at the event, after the event. You feel and hear it’s value. Quite often, I think it’s a global thing, it’s good delicacy that after an event… I kind of sounds a little bit snobbish… but true edicassy dictates that you should always thank your host for the event after the event. Quite often in luxury you would always find that your high-end clients will always send you a note of thanks or send you chocolate or flowers saying thank you for inviting them to the event. So you do get a response. Now your general public, forget it. They will not bother about it.

I: Can you see some change about the perceived quality of the product or the brand? For example if you have a new shoe collection and talk about the high quality of the products, do the guests perceive the high quality that you want to convey?

P: Of course. But you also get that prior as well. So a lot of the times, depending on the level of the event, depending on the type of event. I’ve done so many event where clients feel so obliged and thankful that they were invited that they actually come in and purchase a full look to wear at that event. They want to look the part, the brand…there’s that added benefit. They trust in the brand and of course that’s why they’re such a strict government on the quality of events to follow through the brand values. Gucci would very rarely do an event unless if its perfect. There was a few times in Denmark where I would try to shut down a few parties because… it was with Armani because there’s a guy in Denmark who’ve had I think it was the Armani underwear licensee which was with another distributor. During Copenhagen Fashion Week he would host a party… what he called the Armani party. But it wasn’t the Armani party because he had no right to say it was because he was the underwear distributor. So with the Armani team in Italy we had to try to shut down the event or get our name removed because it wasn’t correct. Or he could say Armani underwear party, but not Armani on its own. I mean brands are very very hands on when it comes to this, to make sure everything is perfect according to brand guidelines, and if not then they remove themselves.

I: With the example of the guests who come and purchase a full look to wear at the event, it sounds like a loyal customer and not maybe a new customer. The people that you talk about in the events is it usually people who is loyal to the brand that you already have in your customer base, or have you had events where they where trying to get new customers?

P: Of course, it just depends on the objective. There are events where the objective is to celebrate the launch of a new collection, and if that’s the case you would have a good mix of solid customers that you know would buy the pieces as a loyalty to them and thank them but also to give them the exclusive on seeing the collection. And then of course potential new customers, but you manage your lists, that is where I go back to say that this list management is a very important part of events. There are agencies that specialize on list management. So if you need recruitment then they will find the people who buy the brand, or if you need just
general feel good positive vibe, or if you need trendsetting...they will find the right people, the right mix depending on your strategy and the objective.

I: Do you think that an event can give effects in terms of perceived quality and brand loyalty for both already loyal customers and new customers? Are there a difference of how much an event can do depend on if you are a new or an old?

P: Of course. If it’s a shit event then it will send a bad impression on the perception of the brand, because an event is just an extension of the brand. And the same on the other way around. And it is the same with all effects. If it is a good event it will have psotive effect, if it is a bad event it will have negative effects. An event is an aspect of the brand so if its not executed well then naturally the perception changes.

I: If you then have a shitty event, how would the negative impact be on the new versus old customer?

P: Your loyal customer would have a certain expectation of the brand because now naturally they have been to events before. And your new customer is waiting to be impressed with anything, their expectations are open but their expectations are to be impressed. Whereas your loyal customers have expectations on a higher level, what they already experienced before and not below. So an event may generate a higher level of impact on the loyal customers with higher expectations, but it may also give a greater negative impact. I’ve been to some luxury events in here in Hong Kong where they would serve unlimited amount of Champagne or like in The Middle East where they would not serve champagne. Whereas in Denmark they will serve champagne but if they are too many people you can’t have more than one glass because there’s too many people to cater for. So all these things has to be managed.

I: If you think about these four concepts - brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty – how would you measure them?

P: Prior or after?

I: In relation to the event, after the event.

P: You actually want to measure it all the way through. That’s why you have brand guidelines and so much pre work is done to ensure that the event is according to brand expectations. So everything from “maybe that’s something we’ve missed out”...sampling the menu, trying the menu, sample the champagne, location visits... There’s a lot of behind work that goes into planning a quality event, and that’s key. Once again for luxury brands its quality that’s important, not the quantity. A lot of brands are more concerned about having quality of people attending the event and the right type of people, than having a lot of people. They don’t want 300 people attending their events, they want 50 – but they want the right 50. And maybe the brands in their own head quarters on their own local market like Gucci…Gucci always throw a massive party the day of their fashion show, and then they invite up to 300 people for a big cocktail party with DJ and blahblahblah. That’s the difference between the Nordic market and the rest of the world.

I: You were mentioning sales numbers before, can you use sales numbers to measure PR events? Thinking of having a fashion show when the products that are shown are not available for purchases for some months…

P: Like I said there’s obviously clients who come in prior to the event who will tell you that they are going to an event and they want to look the part, so they’re there to buy a full look...this happens a lot. So you know that for sure. Then naturally you’ll always get foot fall afterwards. As part of the event you want to make sure that the message is coherent all the way through, so if you’re gonna be showing images of the brand you want to make sure that it’s a particular products that there’s a focus on, alternatively you do a lot of product placement on some top celebrities attending the event. I know in Copenhagen we worked with at some point X(Lina?) from Aqua. She’s still very well perceived in the press so we would dress her with the IT bag that was the key focus of that season, which was obviously a key
reason why we’re doing an event. So that would in itself generate PR and exposure around her and the bag, which would then generate overall brand awareness and then sales.

I: Can you see a trend of what the most common effects of an event are? What do you usually get with a PR event?
P: Overall…brand awareness. You tend to get brand awareness and attendance. Those are the two key things because as I said, an event is just a mere extension of the brand. To encounter your clients or customer at an event, and once again have that experience with them, or them have an experience with you about the brand. That’s to the brand overall.

I: What type of event gives what type of effects?
P: Naturally it all comes to your objective full stop. Obviously, if you want some sort of brand awareness then it’s a quality or quantity scenario for every type of thing. This is government by budgets. You don’t have a lot of money naturally, your budget is going to be limited so “what do you do with this”. Then you have to question if it’s better to focus on a quality group, a smaller group, to target my events and then to have a better outcome. Or for example if a brand is re-positioning itself, re-launching itself, then you might want to do a larger scale event because then it’s the quantity aspect, that they want to reach a greater audience. To get more awareness about the brand. So it’s a mix, but a mix in accordance with the objective.

I: What is your personal thoughts of events? Do you think it’s a good activity to use within PR?
P: Personally, No. I hate events because I’ve been to too many, and I’ve organized too many myself, but at the same time because I think a lot of people, true luxury we’re talking real luxury consumers, I wouldn’t consider myself as a high end luxury consumer myself but I consider having the same values in that, it’s time that the true luxury. So my free time is more important than spending an evening standing in a Gucci store drinking champagne… This is for the mass. A lot of the top high-end customers that we had in Denmark, and I think it’s a global thing, they hate events themselves. They’re rich enough to buy their own champagne, they’re rich enough to eat at Norma, they don’t need the brand to pay for them. That’s why I hate events. There are very few innovative events that take place. A lot of people are bored with it. You get an invitation and everyone think it’s just like any other event they’ve ever attended.

I: So it’s a bad activity then?
P: I think a lot of the times events are a waste of money. I think that’s why it all comes down to your objective, because if you ask me, if the objective is brand awareness, there’s a million ways to cut the cake to achieve brand awareness. You can achieve brand awareness a thousand times better through doing a direct segmented digital campaign. I can also purchase lists and do a targeted in-store activation by offering gifts or discounts or something else, I don’t necessarily have to do an event. I think events struggle. And preferably it’s along taking with advertising, and I hate advertising. Sometimes you have to do it but there are smart ways to do it.

I: What activity do you think is better?
P: Depends on the objective. In principal it depends on the objective full stop. If it comes to brand awareness and when it comes to media, I’d spend a lot of my time working on my press relations and ensuring that for example a lot of the press goes to the different fashion shows. It was a better investment for the company to send me to Paris, Milan or London, to co-host and to be with my press in these cities and showing them the collection, doing them the re-season, taking them out to dinner there, than it is for me to do a seasonal event in Copenhagen. Because to send me there was one ticket hotel, but I can see potentially 10 different press titles in Milan for Gucci, to write about a story about the new collection. That cost versus the cost of doing a party in the shop for the 10 press, hoping that they will cover the story and hoping I’ll get people to attend. I have a greater return on the investment,
security in getting exposure, by hand grooming and feeding my press and giving them a little bit of an experience with the brand, than if I have an event.

I: Is it better to focus on the press then?
P: The press is very important, so press would be one thing that I would do a lot. Then the other thing is … it’s a combination of the in-store… it’s more about retail marketing… so more in-store activations with clients and then also with my sales staff. Incentivise my sales staff to give better service and to give better in-store experiences with clients. Giving my staff an incentive to do better sales I’d always see great results and then giving them the power to offer the clients a little discount here or a little gift there. Taking it back to what luxury is truly about.

I: What do you think of the future for PR events, with the whole globalised social media Internet… At the latest Stockholm Fashion Week Ida Klamborn had a fashion show where she had robots sitting front row and you could just see the show on an app. So you didn’t even need to be there to see it. What are your thoughts on the future in relation to PR events and technology?
P: I don’t think that they are going to be less used. I think overall the technology is hugely affecting, and this is maybe a separate discussion, but technology is affecting the luxury fashion industry immensely. We haven’t even begun to see where and how it will affect the industry. I think we’re still struggling to understand and a lot of us people in the industry are still playing around with it. If you look at how technology has redefined the travel and music industry. For what it is now to what it was ten years ago these industries have rewritten themselves completely. We have yet to see that level of impact within fashion and I think it is happening, and it is happening in all different levels. Technology once again is a part of how we do our work, how we engage with our clients. So technology is a new tool that will affect the brand on all levels. Most of the luxury brands that are established are having to understand how do they embrace technology as a tool to still meet their objective. This is the critical point. I see a lot of people loose focus or do something that’s not according with their brand just because “ah this it what we have to do because that’s what we think we should be doing, it’s a part of technology”, this is when you’re an established brand. For new brands coming along I’d advise them 100% to embrace technology from day 1 because they have the opportunity to do so. When it comes to luxury there’s still a paradigm about what is luxury then, because it’s very hard to make technology and digital truly luxurious. So you see a lot of the brands are now splitting themselves, you have Burberry who’s saying that they’re going to do a coherent click on demand, buy on demand, what you see on the runways in the stores type of approach to combat the fast fashion movement. And then you see a lot of the traditional fashion houses saying it’s not luxury, were not gonna do this. This year in particular has been a huge impact for the year. It’s been the year of great change I think, you see at the number of key leading creative directors leaving there posts because they’re saying the obligations to the brand is too much. On the other hand you see a lot of luxury brands truly returning back to what they do best, which is luxury. Then cutting back the crap that didn’t work before, so you know cutting away with things that are not important to the brand. And I think that’s the key trend with luxury. So rather than doing activities for the masses or if you’re gonna do a luxury event, you really do a luxury event. And if you can’t then don’t do it.

I: I think that that was all the questions that I had. Thank you so much for participating. It is very interesting to hear with the differences between the Copenhagen market and the rest of the world.
P: I mean I’ve seen the events they do in the Middle East and Hong Kong. Copenhagen we’re still at a very very naive infant or stage of events. And that’s just a matter of budgets. Until you have the money, you won’t have the big events. You damage the brand who would invest
big on an event if they don’t have a budget for it or the big investment. And unfortunately Scandinavia is not a huge luxury market. But what you do see different in Scandinavia when it comes to luxury, more than other places, is really the collaborations. So you have someone like…I think a good example is fashion exclusive, a woman does events and she collaborates cross sectional collaborations. So she do a lot of collaborations with Mercedes. So She involves Mercedes and then maybe Jyske bank and then a brand. So she taps into the strength of each partner in bringing some sort of other database or product like the car experience or the fashion experience together. I think that’s quite innovative in that way because there’s so little money when it comes to events so you need to really be creative about these events.
Appendix 3.4 Participant D - blogger

I: Just so that you know what my research is about, I’m writing about PR events in the fashion industry. It’s partially about the fundamental aspects of PR events in order to gain a better understanding for what PR event is and also to investigate house such events impact brand equity. Your answers will be anonymous. Do you have any questions?
P: No.
I: Ok, I would like to start with some basic stuff about you, what is your age?
P: I´m turning 23 in June.
I: And you are a blogger, or how would you title yourself?
P: Social media influencer. Because if you’re only a blogger, then it’s only on your site, but if you’re a social media influencer you are also on you know snapchat, Instagram…everything so that’s kind of sums up what youre doing.
I: How long have you been working with this?
P: I´ve been working full time since January. And I’ve been working with my blog since September 2015.
I: If we start with the fundamental aspects of PR events, how would you describe or define a PR event?
P: Well…it´s a gathering of people who are interested in whatever they are presenting and then you showcase your products and you network…that’s it.
I: What would be the main aspects, if you would to describe positive and negative aspects.
P: Positive aspects is very much the networking part of it. Seeing the product in person or showing interest in a product in person so you can maybe be kept in mind as a blogger for collaborations or for whatever…but also to know what’s out there and what’s happening and what trends are forming…to stay aware all the time. I don’t think there’s anything bad about events. I think it’s much stronger to have people come in and present something than it is to just send out a mail about some news.
I: When you go to a PR event do you see yourself as a consumer or more having a business role?
P: A business role definitely. I don’t really see myself as a consumer anymore because my job is as much to get consumers as it is for a clothing brand or something.
I: Speaking of events in general terms, who are using events...what kind of brands use it?
P: Either like the young kind of fast fashion smart brands or the really expensive brands. I don’t really feel like the middle market is very active in this whole event thing. Either it’s a store like Gina Tricot that’s very “oh the consumers, balloons, cupcakes…let’s create some blahblah”. Or else it’s something like Gucci that host a really elegant event. The middle market brands don’t really do it.
I: Why do you think that they don’t do it? Don’t they need it?
P: No no I think they do, but I don’t particularly know why.. it’s just an observation on my behalf. I don’t know why.
I: Why are they used?
P: It’s very hard to speak about PR events in general terms.. If it’s an event for consumers, it’s definitely to make the brand more appealing. Because in every aspect of life you get that friendly feeling either if it’s a brand or a person you always keep coming back for having a very nice memory of that brand and then you know “you remember that time they had that awesome…they had the balloons and everything was pretty”. Then you have a memory of it so you impress your customers and I think that’s a really important tool. When PR does it its to create a stronger network and a stronger awareness of your brand.
I: The events that you go to are they invitation only or open for the public?
P: I rarely go to consumer events just because I go to so many events. I feel like when I didn’t blogged before and when I wasn’t involved in the magazine world I thought events in a store were super exciting. Because you get a little bit of a feel of that exclusive like “ooh the fancy people go to events” and if somebody in a store host a nice event and you can get a glass of champagne you get to feel pampered and a little more fancy and I think a lot of people appeal to that.

I: But now as a more of a blogger or social media influencer?

P: Its because I’m at work here (referring to the event that the interview took place). So I’m at work everywhere I go because I am a public face so for me its not so much an enjoyment experience anymore. It can be really nice but you also have to remember that you’re at work, you’re a professional, so you can’t just totally be yourself like you can if you’re just a consumer because nobody knows you.

I: When you are at an event for work then, how important are the relationships when you visit an event?

P: It’s about nurturing the relationships with the PR girls who has the brands that you want to work with.

I: You are also an ambassador?

P: Yes for several brands.

I: How does that work regarding the events?

P: It depends a lot. Some ambassadorships are more about you get clothes and then you show it on your blog kind of ambassadorships. And then some ambassadorships are based on you get a fee and then you wear the clothes and you have to come to their events. There’s more of a package deal. So it depends on how much the brand buys you. If it’s just about clothes basically they can’t really tell you that you have to be there, but if there’s money involved then you’re like a face. In those cases it’s more about showing that I’m are there and to be supportive of the brand you’re an ambassador for. It’s the same when I go with X (a sports brand) to different running events because I’m both an X running girl but also an ambassador for their sub brand, but there’s been no money involved so actually I can say that I can’t go. But if they were then I would feel even more obligated to go.

I: Do you have different ambassadorships in terms of whether you are obligated to go or not?

P: Yes. In some cases, like the one I described, I am not obligated to go and in some cases I am.

I: Ok. When do you think that brands use events, like in what situations?

P: I think it’s to create awareness. Whether its because they have their 10 year old birthday or they have a new line coming out or if its like Y (mentioning a brand) sometimes host a summer party to kind of kick start the new season…or what do I know. The whole bottom of creating events is to create awareness of your brand. So of course they want something from you, why else would they do it? Harshly they don’t really care too much about you they just care about your money. Well that’s how it is. You can’t say that’s not how it is, because of course every brand also cares about their customers and who is it and who’s our target group and all of that but in the end it’s all about money and they don’t really care who buys it as long as somebody buys it. So it’s all about creating awareness. So the event is to create something that makes the consumer buy it…a relation.

I: Where do PR events take place?

P: Geographically, mostly in big cities because that’s where the most money is. So here in Denmark it is Copenhagen. I used to live in Jylland and I’ve never been to a PR event in Jylland - ever. Even though Århus have maybe 2 PR agencies it’s not the same because maybe there’s 3 bloggers over there and here’s 25… You have to again go where the awareness can be created the most. And the most people live here anyway. So if you’d create one for your consumers, this is also where it would be more normal to go to an event in a
boutique. Where I come from we would be like “oh why is that?” because we are not as used to it as they are over here. Other than that it can really take place anywhere. But somewhere where it fits the brand identity.

I: If you think of the process of going to an event, like before during and after, what happens before the event?

P: I think if you go to an event which somebody’s hosting that you’ve never been interactive with, you’ll have no expectations. Then you’re very open and very “what’s gonna happen”. But if you’re going to an event where you have been to before where they usually go really large on food, then you can be like “oh they have a lot of food” and then either they can be like “oh they never have anything, barely any drinks”. But that’s also how…especially bloggers choose is to “wow we wanna go” because everybody of course wants to be pampered the most. Cause you don’t want to go to an event where there’s nothing. So I think it’s very much also about if you’ve been there before. If there’s any expectation or not.

I: And during the event, what do you do?

P: For me mostly…of course I check out in this case (referring to the event where the interview took place) the clothes and beauty and whatever and all the news because I have to stay on top of these things to be the most relevant blogger. I also feel that it’s very important to come up and say hi and show interest in people who work here because the better they like you the more they’re also gonna be like to their brands if they say “we need a new blogger for this” they’ll say “we love her she’s really nice”. If you never go you’re not gonna be their number one choice and that’s your goal because that’s where the money is.

I: What are your thoughts after the event?

P: I normally go with the a feeling of that something was really great, either the clothes or the food or the PR girl… There’s always something that was really nice. But you can also go away with a feeling of that the clothes was just horrifying or I hated that collections or the food was awful. But then there are some things that was good and some things that was bad, bad that’s always how it is. If you really didn’t like popcorn, then you’d probably hate this event (referring to the event where the interview took place where a popcorn machine was used and the smell of popcorn was evident in the whole room). Even though they really thought all the clothes were nice….but it smells so much of popcorn. You can never make everyone happy.

I: OK, if we add brand equity to PR events, the immaterial value of the brand. When you go to PR events, you mentioned that brand awareness is a part of it. Do you go to events where you didn’t know the brand form before?

P: Sometimes I do.

I: How do they affect your recognition or knowledge or such of the brand?

P: Very much I think. I’m very much a person that if I really like a brand then I’ll very much start to pursue it and I was also like that when I was just a customer. If I found something new I’d be very interested in their collection and the next one and I’d be like “what are they doing now”. But if I like one collection and then the next one was bad, then I’d loose it like loose my excitement for them, because they don’t get too may chances because they’re new in my mind. But if it was something that I’d loved for years and they made a bad collection I’d still wait to see the next one. The same goes for the events. I think it creates a lot of awareness even though it’s a new one but you also forget it easier.

I: Even though it’s a new one? Could you develop that?

P: A brand that I know do not loose as much from a mistake, than a brand that I don’t know will. It’s like your friends. You’re best friend can piss your off even more than your new friends because then it’s like “ok you’re a douche”. It takes longer for a best friend to make mistakes that will make you leave him or her.
I: Regarding the brand associations, such as thoughts, feelings, attitudes, do you think that the PR events have an effect on that? For the brand and/or for its products?
P: Both I think. If the event is good.
I: If it’s a bad event, do you think that it will have a negative effect on the image or trustworthiness or such?
P: Not necessarily on the brand. I think if it is a very established brand and they have a bad event I wouldn’t dislike the clothing I’d just dislike the event. I don’t think it hurts the brand necessarily. I think it hurts the brand way more to have a bad collection. If it’s a even great or a just ok collection but a bad event, you’d still remember that you actually liked the clothes. You won’t remember that the event was bad. If it was a great party and they had thrown a lot of money on it but the clothes was hideous, then you’ll still remember that the clothes was not that great. So the products and the brand is more important, because that’s why you come in the first place. But it’s the same if brand that you really like have a bad PR person standing in front of it or a PR person that don’t like you, that is way harder. If you have a really nice PR girl who have ugly clothes... sometimes the nicest people just have the most horrible collections. You’re like “I really like you but I don’t like your clothes” and then you have to deal with somebody who’s actually not very nice but have all the nice clothes.
I: If you think of the quality of the products, if a brand tell you that “this dress or bag or shoe or whatever has really good quality”, do you think that the PR event helps you believe that? It could be a brand that you know or a brand that you don’t know from before.
P: No not necessarily believe it. I think I don’t really disbelief quality...I think if somebody tells me this is 100% silk or this is ecological or its from Sweden I’d still believe it if someone in the store told me. The PR event is not really needed in order for me to believe in a brands quality. You can get that information anywhere. As long as it’s nice to touch and feel and look at.
I: How does the PR event affect your loyalty to the brand?
P: I think it can definitely affect it. It’s the same if you have a person at the PR that you just don’t click with then it can very much hurt the brand I think, because its bad publicity. I can actually just go and buy it in the store. It makes me not want to buy it because the person who’s handling it or who’s my contact into the brand is not nice. That hurts the brand in my eyes. Even though I really like it.
I: If it is a nice person then?
P: Then it would give a positive effect. It’s the same when you go to Louis Vuitton and sometimes the person that you meet barely says hi to you and sometimes the person it super nice. It creates totally different experiences, even though it’s something that you maybe can not afford or something you can afford. The brand kind of looses something if the people there are just not very nice, because you get that feeling. And that’s the same, you can actually grow to love a brand that is maybe not your style but because the store is such an amazing place to be. Like & Other Stories, it’s not necessarily my type of clothes but I love being in there because the atmosphere is just great. That makes you want to buy the clothes even though you when you get home you’re like “I don’t like this”. It’s a very psychological thing. So an event with nice people representing the brand and a nice atmosphere will absolutely affect my loyalty to the brand.
I: How does that work when you are a blogger and you are an ambassador, do you feel that you can be loyal without the business deal?
P: Yeah I very much only choose ambassadorships that I believe in. Because then it’s more serious then just a collaboration. That you choose to be a part of their team and if they have a team of sucky girls then you are also a sucky girl.
I: Thinking about these 4 concepts - brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand awareness and brand associations – what do you think is the most important effect of a PR event for a brand?
P: Brand awareness is everything because if no one knows about you then you don’t exist.
I: Is it different depending on what brand it is? If it is for example a well established brand or a total new one.

P: If it is a total new brand it’s rather obvious that they need to create brand awareness. For already established brands it I think it can be something else. Some brands are probably also very keen on being good for the environment and all kinds of things but when everything comes to an end you can’t really care about your brand being good to the environment if nobody buys it. So everything is about creating brand awareness because even though you’re really established… It’s the same, it’s also why brands like Gucci change designers. It’s because they have to create new awareness about their brand. Because otherwise it dies even though it’s a ver very established brand. If nobody buys it, it cant live. And then you can care so much about your denim wash being something something or everybody has to be a women because of women empowerment and all kinds of other crap…but if nobody buys it then you don’t live. So everything is about brand awareness, even though you’re well established.
I: Could you see a trend of what kind of events gives what type of effects? Like if you´ve been to a certain type of event, you went with a certain type of feeling?

P: Events can be used in so many different ways. I think from a blogger point of view, everything is just more about the more you give the more you get. If a brand takes you traveling and gives you a whole experience of for example the Gucci summerhouse and you go to Ibiza, then you make me fall in love even more with the brand or the PR girls then you would do at an event in the store where they show you the collection and give you a glass of water. The better cake the better… You always feel like that if it was a really good birthday then it was a really good birthday. Not if it was a medium birthday. And that’s the same with events.
I: Do you think its possible to review an event? Like how did we do, was it a good or bad event…

P: Yeah definitely. I think you could. I’ve actually been doing some consultant work in other smaller PR agencies that when they host events they need my advise for…if it’s a blogger event what food, what do we like, what things do we need to take good pictures… If it’s a magazine event, because I worked for a magazine for almost 2 years, it’s a whole other story. So you could definitely prepare yourself for which type of event for what kind of people who are there and I also think that’s why you can afterwards review it. You could have the same person come in or choose 5 blogger girls and be like “we’d love your help for the next time we’re hosting an event, what did you think of this one”. Definitely.

I: Could it maybe be not such a good way to ask the people who were there? For example if you have an event with the press, could you do the same with them? Such as send out a sheet of questions for them to answer.

P: No, nobody would do that because everyone have so much to do. They would never respond to a survey…never. Even though it would be good in order to know how the event was, but they would never do that. Then you could talk to somebody beforehand. You could be like “we need a magazine person and one blogger, before you go to this event we’d love if you could take notes”. It could be somebody that was a good friend of the house and could do them a favour. You know if Z (referring to a person working at the PR agency holding the event where the interview took place) would ask me if I would do that I would totally do it. But you cant just send out a survey.
I: What would you look at then? If you were asked to do it?
P: I don’t think I would particularly look at anything. I would just do as I always do, just be there and feel it and eat the food and see if I liked it. And then she could ask me questions afterwards and I could give a review. But it’s very much about the feeling and the atmosphere. Its always about the feeling and the people and the food the drinks the clothes…
It’s all about mood. When you guys host an event it’s always something very different from one out there. Like the last event, it was very girly…the little cakes… it was a very cute event (referring to an event that the PR agency hosted in a smaller meeting room compared to the one who was happening at that moment out in the big showroom. The little room is smaller and with pink interior).
I: I think that was all my questions, thank you so much for participating.
Appendix 3.5 Participant E - consumer

I: Just so that you know what my research is about, I’m writing about PR events in the fashion industry. It’s partially about the fundamental aspects of PR events in order to gain a better understanding for what PR event is and also to investigate house such events impact brand equity. Your answers will be anonymous. Do you have any questions?
P: No.
I: How would you describe or define a PR event?
P: Hm… That’s hard. But…it’s a lot of fun, famous people, goodie bags, drinks, cocktails, performance, a singer or something like that to perform…the brands present something.
I: What are the positive and negative aspects with PR events?
P: Positive is that people are talking about it afterwards. Because that’s what say if the event went well or not. That’s where the value of the event lies. The organisers may think that its great, but if the people around think its crap, then the event is crap because its what they think that matters.
I: Why are PR events used?
P: I don’t know… I mean it probably depends so much on the brand and their situation, you know who they are and what they want.
I: Who are using event?
P: Big brands maybe. I have not been to any event where I didn’t know the brand.
I: Why is it only big brand that use it?
P: Maybe because they have the money… I don’t know.
I: When are they used?
P: When something new is happening, like a release or that they start doing something new. Or when brands maybe want some more attention than they’ve had before.
I: Could you explain that a bit further? What type of release could it be or what type of new thing?
P: A release of a new collection. Or when they do a collaboration. Or when they open a new store.
I: Why would the brands want more attention than they had before?
P: I don’t know. Maybe because they are not that “in” at the moment. They maybe want to get bigger.
I: Where are they used?
P: It may be everywhere. But I think that they think of their target market when they choose where they have them. For example if they are more sporty or something like that. So it depends on what kind of brand it is, what their target market is, what they like and how old they are. You can’t for example have a cool fashion brand in an elder care home, that would be weird. So I really think that they think of who they are targeting, who they want to reach.
I: If you could take me through an event that you visit. What happens before, during and after?
P: At the event it’s usually a good atmosphere, everyone is happy, you are excited. But I think that at least 50% of the persons who went there go from there thinking “was it only this?” Ok now I’ve been standing in the line for a really long time and then it was over in a second. Have I wasted my time on this. I have been in both situations. I think that the events are more hyped than what they actually are. Sure sometimes I think events are super awesome and that I really got something out from it, but there are also times where I didn’t feel that I got something out from it, that it was nothing special. So afterwards I think there are many who think “euh”. So it didn’t really gave anything. The use of someone famous for example. I’ve been to an event where I was super excited before because it was a famous person that I was about to meet at the event, but when I actually met the person, it was nothing special at all. I
don’t think famous people are that different from all the rest of us. But sure, some other times you may feel that you really get something like to know something new about the brand that you didn’t know before, like why a pair of tights are good to run in. Then people may think wow that’s cool, I didn’t know that, I should by that instead for those I have. But of course really depends on what event it is.

I: What make you want to go to an event?
P: Goodie bags. Haha it sounds super shallow, but yeah goodie bags and food and drinks. I love free stuff. But otherwise, if its something really special. I don’t know what but. Not if it’s a brand that is too expensive for me though. That I wouldn’t care about. I have been to fashion shows and met designers and stuff during the Copenhagen fashion week. But then I’ve felt “that is some strange clothes, really, how can it cost so much money”. But sure, it is an experience, and you can say that you have been there and that you have seen it. And its super pretty when you stand there, but it doesn’t mean that I go and buy it. It is more like it is fun to go, but it doesn’t matter for what I choose to buy.

I: Could you develop further what an event that is really special might be like or include?
P: I don’t know hoe to explain it… No, not really... I don’t actually know, but something special.

I: Ok so if we add brand equity to the perspective, what impact PR events have on brand equity, the kind of immaterial value of the brand. For example why you choose a pair of Levi’s jeans instead of another pair. How do PR events affect your brand awareness, like brand recognition, brand recall, top of mind, brand knowledge… Do you think events have an effect on that?
P: Yeah, but that is because I kind of like brands. But for someone who doesn’t care for brands I don’t think that it has an effect. When I shop I invest in clothes or shoes that have good quality. Especially shoes. Sure there is a limit to what I can give for a pair, but I do pay some extra to get good quality. And therefore a PR event of a brand that may have or seem to have that will surely effect my awareness of the brand. Or just if you care. If all the big brands that everyone know invite to a PR event where you can hear more about them and their products and they offer food and drinks, sure everyone would come. And then decide if they like it or not. But then if you’re totally loyal to one shoe brand for example, you will not care about another shoe brands event. But sure people who maybe not know anything about shoes, how to take care of them, will maybe think its interesting. And then maybe they will buy it because now they know about this particular brand how to do.

I: Do you think that it may have a negative effect?
P: No, not really. Then it have to be really shitty. Because you come in and doesn’t really have any expectations to it. of course its very different depending on the brand and so in… If there’s a famous person that you know, then I think you’re totally excited. But if you go to an event where you will learn about something totally new, honestly I don’t think you have any expectations. You come for the food, to hear or see something that you didn’t know what it was, think”ok”. And was it ok, then it was ok. And if it was very nice it, then it was very nice. So I don’t know if events may have a negative effect in that way. That someone thinks “I will never buy that”. Because it is never someone representing the brand that talks negative about it. So either it has no effect or it has a positive effect.

I: Ok what about brand associations, thoughts feelings attitudes beliefs… to the products and/or to the brand.
P: I totally think that you believe everything that they say. Of course again, it is different for different persons, but I think that most will believe what they say. Even though they have their own experiences. But people who are easily swayed, if someone say: this shoe is amazing, forget all the bullshit you’ve heard about it, it is great. Then I’m sure there are some
who think “wow…ok lets buy this shoe because he says its great” and swallows it all. But sure some will say “I’ve tried it and it sucks.. don’t try to tell me its good quality”.

I: What about the effect on differentiation and distinctiveness from other brands?
P: Yeah.. a little.. it depends on how big it is. If it’s a small event then I don’t thin k it will make a difference. Probably it’s those who not are for us normal people, that make a difference.

I: Do you think it makes any difference for your loyalty to the brand?
P: I think so..no doubt. If it’s a brand that you have been using for a while and that you know about, it’s also therefor you go to the event. Sure there may be those who don’t know it at all and go and learn something new. So yeah I think that there are many of those who already are loyal that gets even more loyal.

I: And those who didn’t know the brand before, does the event make a difference form them in terms of loyalty?
P: Yes, but I think that those who know it from before and already uses it it more affected.

I: If you think about the four concepts of brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty.. on what do you think an event gives most effect?
P: Not brand loyalty… But brand awareness. In the sense that people who don’t know them but go because it may be fun, they come and get to know about them. But yeah brand loyalty as well for those who already know it.

I: And what is less important?
P: Maybe brand associations. Or maybe not. No perceived quality.

I: Why?
P: I do not know. I just think that the other ones are more important.

I: And what effect do you think that the brands want most?
P: That’s different depending on the brand I think. I think it’s really different. Because if it’s a small brand its probably brand awareness, but if it’s a big brand it’s probably brand loyalty.

I: DO you think its possible to measure or evaluate what the effect is from an event? So kind of see what the PR event had for effect?
P: I don’t know. Then they should maybe send some sheet with questions to them who where at the event. And not just care about the big bloggers and stuff but about the normal people. Even though someone may not have a lot of followers on Instagram it’s still one point of view. Send out flyers.. maybe in the goodie bags. And then you can choose self if you want to answer or not.

I: What do you think about looking at the sales numbers?
P: No you can’t do that. I mean you could think that it was a great event, but maybe you don’t afford it this month so you buy it next month instead. No.. no I don’t think you can look at the sales numbers, you can’t judge it on that.

I: Do you think that the brands can determine whether it was a good or not good event?
P: Yeah sure. No one puts it up on Instagram if it not was nice. Or at least I have never seen it. They post on Instagram if they really think it’s nice.

I: What about those who maybe don’t have Instagram, but think sits super nice and shop a lot?
P: I don’t know…