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# Entertainment News Production: A Case Study

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**Ashley Derthick**  
**Lee Honors College Thesis**

**Entertainment News Production: A Case Study**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study reviews literature on the construction of celebrities and the production of entertainment news, and then takes an in-depth look at the operations of Maximo TV, a Los Angeles-based production company. Maximo TV records and publishes videos and photographs of celebrities at red carpet events and during other public appearances, and their material serves as a “feed” for major media outlets. A case study of their approach to generating entertainment news provides a snapshot of how and why particular stories about celebrities are targeted for development and distribution.

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## INTRODUCTION

Entertainment news has evolved into a multi-billion-dollar industry with consumers worldwide continually seeking the latest details on the personal and professional lives of celebrities. On the other end of this widely successful industry are the producers, photographers, journalists, and editors who make their livelihood ensuring consumers are provided an endless and up-to-date stream of information covering celebrity fashions, health secrets, movie projects, love affairs, children, etc. *The Week* reported in a 2011 article that the entertainment news industry currently has an annual revenue of \$3 billion, and this number is expected to increase at a rapid pace in the coming years.

As Jim Benson put it in his 2007 article, “People have an insatiable appetite for [celebrity news]” (2007). Americans in particular seem intrigued by celebrity gossip magazines and nightly news shows. E! is an entire television network devoted to providing viewers with nightly news updates on the latest happenings and scandals in Hollywood and an endless stream of reality shows feeding into the constant demand from Americans for an in-depth look into the private lives of others. With the addition of technology and social media sites including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, the public cannot get enough entertainment news, and celebrities seem to be more than happy to feed this addiction to a certain extent. While many celebrities claim to enjoy the close connection to fans that social media provides, there are obvious downfalls to the sometimes very personal information posted on such sites. For example, with such instantaneous and direct access to celebrities, the media is able to write a whole story solely based on the fact that a starlet removed her married name from her Facebook account.

E! Networks CEO and President Ted Harbert has said, “There’s an entire generation whose idea of hard news is the latest on Lindsay Lohan . . . Scary things can happen . . . when a

society values gossip over politics and its own governance” (as cited in de Vries, 2006). But why is celebrity journalism such an infatuation in today’s society? Major celebrities have been around since the silent film era of the 1910s and 1920s; in the twentieth century, many stars (including Marilyn Monroe, James Dean, Jane Mansfield, and Elvis Presley) became cultural icons during a time when photographs, fan magazine articles, and occasional public appearances were the primary ways that the public had access to them outside of their creative work (films, music, and so on). Because of this limited exposure, twentieth-century celebrities had more power and control in terms of their public image and what knowledge they offered the public. The Internet and other communication technologies have changed the way celebrities are covered in today’s world and curiosity about celebrities has evolved into a whirlwind and, at times, out-of-hand obsession. Anne Thompson, a columnist for the *Hollywood Reporter*, argues that current day fanatics “no longer [want] to adore celebrities from afar . . . ‘they want info on the real lives of celebrities, who are all too human . . . it’s all fevered competition for who has the best mate, the best boobs, the best body, the best politics, and the best womb’” (as cited in de Vries, 2006).

The definition of what constitutes a “celebrity” is malleable and correlated to a person’s standpoint and ideas/views on the world of celebrities and their star power. Some may argue a celebrity is any person whose name is known by the public for whatever reason, whether they are a politician, a movie star, or a sports broadcaster. The definition of celebrity I will focus on is the one provided by Rein, Kottler, and Stoller as cited in a 2006 article written by Violina, Pollock, and Hayward:

The term ‘celebrity,’ refers to an individual ‘whose name has attention-getting, interest-riveting and profit-generating value’ . . . one defining characteristic of celebrity is that a

social actor attracts large-scale public attention; the greater the number of people who know of and pay attention to the actor, the greater the extent and value of [the celebrity].

(p. 50)

I will be considering entertainment news and the celebrities covered in this specific genre of media, including television stars, film stars, reality television stars, pop stars, and musicians.

With such a large industry making money from the exposure and exploitation of the lives of celebrities, one cannot help but wonder about its functions and effects. For example, how might this constant attention to the rich and famous affect the lives of the “ordinary” people who are exposed to it? Do the average readers of gossip magazines – who, according to de Vries (2006) are women in their mid- to late twenties – make life decisions based on what they see their favorite celebrities doing? What process – if any – exists to identify relevant celebrities and related events? Are there topics that generate more coverage because of public interest? It is also worth examining how stars use the vastly expanding industry of entertainment news to build their public persona and highlight their successes and attributes to amplify their presence in the entertainment industry.

In this thesis, I will review some of the scholarly work that has been done on the construction of celebrities and the production of entertainment news, and then I will take an in-depth look at the operations of Maximo TV, a Los Angeles-based production company where I interned during the summer of 2013. Maximo TV records and publishes videos and photographs of celebrities at red carpet events and during other public appearances, and their material serves as a “feed” for major media outlets. A case study of their approach to generating entertainment

news provides a snapshot of how and why particular stories about celebrities are targeted for development and distribution.

## THE PHENOMENON OF STARDOM

Richard Dyer has written extensively on the nature of stardom and argues that “a state of law, an efficient bureaucracy, and a structural social system” are preconditions for stars (celebrities) to emerge (2009, p. 7). Other factors that must exist to produce stars, according to Dyer, include:

A large scale society (stars cannot know everyone but everyone can know stars, social mobility (anyone . . . may become a star), production of surplus (commodities in excess of basic material needs), development of a technology of mass communication, rigid separation of work and leisure, and increase of social mobility into expressive role positions unconnected with sacred institutions. (p. 7-8)

Once such preconditions are met, as they are in the United States, stars may develop. For the construction of a specific star, Dyer emphasizes the importance of a media team and the entourage of people dedicated to cultivating the star’s image, public persona, style, talent, and anything else notable to the star’s powerful image and fan base. Katrina Wilson, who wrote a blog post on the work of Dyer, explains that Dyer’s view is that a star is “born” into the entertainment industry “as a ‘real’ human, possessing gender and race characteristics, and existing against a socio-historic background” (2013). This person is presented to the public with qualities and characteristics that every human being possesses – parents, siblings, a gender, age, ethnic background, hometown, etc. These details constitute the star’s life story and make them who he/she is, providing the foundation for what attracts fans to him/her. Consider Justin Bieber,

who captured millions of fans virtually overnight, capitalizing on his boyish features, his incredibly shiny and perfectly swooped hair, and his admirable dance skills. His media team sold him to the public as a young boy from Canada, brought up by his grandparents and young mother, with dreams of making it big in Hollywood. He was the small-town boy to whom every girl in America felt she could relate – the boy next door.

Once the star has been introduced to and ingrained in the minds and hearts of the public and the media has steadily covered their professional life, the second phase in generating star power begins. Dyer explains that the star now enters the phase in which their personal characteristics and beliefs take center stage and either make or break the star. This is the phase that is vital in determining the future fate of that star in relation to the culture/demographics to which they are relevant. This is essentially where “one hit wonders” fade into the darkness once their fifteen minutes of fame are up or “legends” are born and planted in our hearts forever. According to Dyer, “The star transformation process turns them into a construct, but the construct has a foundation in the real [world.] We tend to read them as not-entirely-fictional, as being . . . very much of their time and culture, the product of a particular generation” (as cited in Wilson, 2013). Now that the star has captured the attention of the public with their skill set and talent, the public wants to know about the “real person” hidden under all the glitz and glamour. They want to know what this person does when they are not in the limelight – who they date, their political patterns, their fashion sense, what and where they eat, what their families and close group of friends are like, etc. And there are teams of people ready to find this information, whether the star is willing to provide it or not.

To explain how stars, namely film stars, make their name known in the entertainment industry and ignite interest in their latest project, Dyer refers to the work of Thomas Harris. The



process begins with what Harris refers to as a “preliminary buildup starting months or even years before the star is seen on the screen” (as cited in Dyer, 2009, p. 12), including the magazine articles in which they provide a photo shoot and correlating interview, television appearances that may include other cast members, red carpet appearances in relation to the upcoming film or other high publicized projects, rumors circulating about a romance with another co-star, and any other publicity stunts the public relations team can conjure up to create buzz.

The next phase involves creating star power to promote a project; now a “pre-sale campaign” is begun that includes not only the star’s personality but also the plotline and substance of the performer’s upcoming film. Audience members will most likely go see a film starring a celebrity they find attractive or likeable and to add to the interest in the film, a well written and intriguing plotline will only further this motivation to see it. The final stage lies in the hands of the business team in charge of the filmmaking process and this is where the advertisements are made, including movie trailers, film posters, and websites. Throughout the whole process the most powerful aspect in promoting a new project, according to Harris, is the entertainment news industry’s coverage of the celebrities in the film.

Citing Orrin E. Klapp, Dyer argues there are four ways in which media texts can construct a star’s image: promotion, publicity, films, and criticism and commentaries (2009, p. 60). Through any of these four routes, the media can shape a star into whatever public image they desire and the star, in turn, can use this invented image to build their persona and make their name relevant and prevalent in entertainment news. To promote a star in the news is the most direct and controlled way to create the desired image of the star. This route includes all intentional and constructed images of the star including press releases, interviews in magazines and on television, fan page postings, advertisements, etc. The star and those in charge of

promoting them use this route often to create the star they want the public to see. Publicity is defined by Klapp as information that “does not appear to be *deliberate* image-making . . . it is ‘what the press finds out’ . . . genuine publicity [is] the scandals” (as cited in Dyer, 2009, p. 61). This is what gossip magazines cover and the “juicy” information that allows the public to observe any discrepancies between the promoted image of the star and their actual self. Hollis Alpert, a publicist, explains that the public likes scandalous news on celebrities more than constructed promotion because “the public prefers its stars to behave a little crazily” (as cited in Dyer, 2009, p. 61).

In the contemporary era, social media can be an important factor in establishing and/or promoting stars. As previously noted, the public is more connected than ever to celebrities and their everyday lives due to social media. It is not hard to “get to know” a star when they are constantly updating their Twitter feed to inform the public what they are up to at that moment in time or when celebrities post a picture of their newborn baby. Fans now feel as if they know their favorite celebrity at a personal level and can relate more closely to the lives of celebrities. In addition, entertainment news outlets are more capable of hunting out information and getting the most in-depth coverage because of social media updates tracking celebrities. It is also a way for the celebrities to promote themselves or their upcoming projects and for entertainment news to cover the event and publicize the celebrities’ lives. When a famous film or television star posts pictures of herself and her new husband on her Instagram account, revealing that they are on vacation in the tropical islands of Bora Bora, the public is able to gain access into that star’s personal life. This opportunity to see the private moment in the life of a celebrity would have been nonexistent had it not been for the platform of Instagram not only allowing, but also encouraging, the celebrity to share that private moment with the world. In the contemporary

media environment, the gap between celebrities' public life and private life has been closed and the line between invasive coverage and "necessary" coverage has been blurred.

## THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF ENTERTAINMENT NEWS

Given the popularity of entertainment news, it is important to consider why people care about celebrities and what the outcome of following these stories generally is. While many people may roll their eyes at entertainment news and label it "junk" with no logical purpose or impact, this is far from the truth. As Dyer points out, "Stars have a major control over the representation of people in society – and how people are represented as being in the mass media is going to have some kind of influence (even if only reinforcement) on how people are in society" (2009, p. 8). He feels that in order for a star to demonstrate power and privilege they need to influence the public's reactions to their reported behaviors – as well as the general attitudes and actions of the public.

Orrin E. Klapp's research on a celebrities' role in society in relation to existing social norms and the status quo is outlined in Dyer's book. Klapp asserts that there are three different roles a celebrity can take on in relation to the norms that currently exist in society – reinforcement, seduction, and transcendence. To reinforce a social role a celebrity must "encourage [the public] to play those [roles] which are highly valued – and to maintain the image of the group superself" (as cited in Dyer, 2009, p. 24). They are ultimately encouraging society to continue employing and embodying a role that is deemed socially acceptable and desirable. For instance, the classic "American beauty" is often thought to be a skinny, blond-haired, blue-eyed woman who dresses in the latest fashions. Consequently, when stars such as Jessica Simpson and Blake Lively appear in magazines, females are likely to associate that with the

“American beauty” role and attempt to replicate the images they observe. Men are also more likely to be attracted to that type of female. The more an image is displayed and covered by media, the more that image will be sought after and considered admirable and desirable.

“Reinforcement” is the most common role taken on by celebrities and it is the one most accepted by society and the one that comes with fewer problems and “meltdowns” (unless that celebrity chooses to diverge from that role/appearance later on in their career).

When a celebrity takes on the role of “seduction” they ultimately “break the rules or norms, but in a charming way . . . [demonstrating] that ‘it is possible, permissible, even admirable, to romp in the forbidden pasture’” (Dyer, 2009, p. 24). It is important to note that these stars do not campaign for the title of a “role model” nor do they provide much insight into their inner workings and thoughts. They merely conduct their business in a way that most would view as different or not necessarily correct when considering accepted morality or rules. Classic examples of stars in the seduction role are James Dean and Marilyn Monroe. Both were made famous by their work and talent but maintained legendary status and are still known today because of their blatant sexuality and their cheeky responses to questions that caused controversy or scandal. Dean was famous for being a “bad boy” who did not have a care in the world and walked to the beat of his own drum and Monroe was made famous for her “sex kitten” appearance. Although they shed the dominant image that stars of their period employed, they were still loved by millions and thought to have talent and personality. People respected them and adored them despite – and perhaps because of – their unique behavior.

“Transcendence” is when the star “produces a fresh point of view, a feeling of integrity, and makes a new [type of star] . . . [they] redefine and recreate standards by which experience is to be judged” (Dyer, 2009, p. 24). The most modern day example of this type of star power is

Lady Gaga. She came onto the scene in 2008 and was known for her outrageous outfits and unique music video concepts from the start. The public had not had a celebrity under their scope that was like her before and people became infatuated with her and intrigued by Gaga's distinctive image. They wanted to know what kind of person was behind the crazy and over-the-top costumes and why she acted and dressed the way she did. She encouraged her fans to be unique and embrace their flaws and differences. Millions of fans flocked to her in need of someone who believed in them and who encouraged them to believe they were beautiful regardless of their differences or insecurities. She created a platform and springboard for those who felt they did not fit in.

When considering the roles celebrities play in the public's lives, Dyer draws upon studies done by Daniel Boorstin and Herbert Marcuse. Boorstin declares in his book *The Image* that celebrities are simply faces used to exploit and sell products to consumers. According to Boorstin, celebrities have no real personality or meaning to their existence; rather, they are known for their "well-knownness [sic], and not for any talent or specific quality . . . stars do not have a 'strong character, but a definable, publicizable [sic] personality, a figure which can become a nationally-advertised trademark'" (as cited in Dyer, 2009, p. 13). This idea is most closely observed in reality television shows. In ABC's dating reality show *The Bachelorette*, 25 men compete to win the heart of one lucky woman in search for a lifetime partner. When casting the show, producers must take into consideration that women are the primary viewers and must appeal to the desires of those that watch the show. This explains why the men they cast are physically attractive young men with a buff physique and successful career. According to Boorstin's idea of stars that appeal to the public, ABC could hire any man in America that is in his late twenties or early thirties and have him work out, groom him, give him a tan, and make up

a career and sell this man to their viewers with resulting success. Viewers would fall in love with the created image of the man, not a man who had a talent or skill set prior to being cast and groomed by producers.

The shared idea between Boorstin and Marcuse is that celebrities can be created from anyone; however, their beliefs differ when it comes to the public purpose that celebrities have. Boorstin believes celebrities are solely created to sell products and ideas to the consumer. They can be molded into anything the producers need in order to market the desired product or idea, while Marcuse feels that celebrities are born because they represent a highly publicized leader serving as an example of a subgroup of people in existing in society. Marilyn Manson is not appealing to all types of people, however; he represents a very specific group of people in society most often referred to as “gothic.” Because of this, he has been able to serve as an example of how those who identify as “gothic” should dress, act, speak, behave, etc. In turn, others in society that are not “gothic” are able to view Manson as an example of what “gothic” people look like and how they typically behave, allowing them to identify and label the “gothic” people of society they observed. Similarly, the popular television show *Gossip Girl* is appealing to the female teenagers that identify as “preppy” or “popular” and enjoy following the love lives and fashion styles of the wealthy and privileged characters on the show. Every celebrity is intended to appeal to a certain group of people and Marcuse explains it in this way: “[Celebrities] are no longer images of another way of life but rather freaks of the same life, serving as an affirmation rather than negation of the established order” (as cited in Dyer, 2009, p. 13).

Celebrities serve as examples of how people in society are expected to behave and appear and the public feels they must imitate and replicate the celebrity with whom they most closely identify in order to be accepted. Entertainment news has the ability to create the standards to

which the rest of society uses to judge itself and behave. This explains why fitness magazines and fashion magazines are appealing and offer advice for every facet of human life including dating, fashion, health, fitness, and more. People want to be like their favorite celebrity and the media is answering this desire with an outpouring of information about where celebrities get their clothes, what restaurants they eat at, their fitness routine, etc. The media has the ability to take a celebrity's choices and reprimand or affirm them, potentially affecting public attitudes or behavior. If smoking marijuana is glamorized and popularized in entertainment news, the chances are likely that the taboo will be removed from marijuana and people will be more interested in trying it for themselves.

Valerie Gorin and Annik Dubied conducted a study in 2011; they were interested in how the coverage of celebrities affects society and individuals. They found that the act of reporting on the everyday antics of a highly sought after person – a celebrity – provides a basis and guideline for readers/viewers in terms of how they should act in almost every aspect of their lives. By following the lifestyles and behaviors of celebrities, society is working towards self monitoring; people judge their own and others' actions in relation to how celebrities act.

Such stories report on celebrities' movements and actions of all kinds, and tend to comment on the character of those in the spotlight and the attitudes, opinions, and norms which they do or do not observe . . . By focusing on the rich and famous and their behavior, whether respectable or not, celebrity news creates and portrays 'desirable people' through a 'tinsel trail of anecdotes.' (p. 601)

The entertainment news industry focuses on covering those celebrities with attributes that are both "imitable and inimitable" (Gorin and Dubied, 2011, p. 601), allowing the celebrities to act as role models for society in terms of behavior and actions that are deemed acceptable and

unacceptable. Consumers of entertainment news are guided through a constant and pervasive process of “checking” and judging the actions, decisions, behaviors, etc. of celebrities 1) to ensure that a given celebrity is acting in a way the consumer feels is appropriate and 2) to monitor their *own* behavior in society to ensure they are making good decisions in their everyday lives. This process allows the public to use the lives of celebrities as benchmarks to plan and evaluate their own actions. For example, if Sarah picks up a tabloid magazine and comes across an image of Rihanna wearing leather pants that Sarah feels are quite flattering on the starlet, Sarah may now decide that she too will wear leather pants in an attempt to recreate the desired behavior (good sense of fashion displayed by Rihanna) in her own life. Conversely, if Sarah picks up the latest issue of *Star* and reads an article about Britney Spears’ lack of sufficient mothering to her two young sons, and Sarah finds the details of Spears’ parenting style to be quite mind boggling and inappropriate, she may now decide that when she has children of her own, she will do “better” than Spears and never abandon them. Sarah has used reported celebrity behaviors in entertainment news to judge, critique, and either alter or maintain her actions and beliefs.

Entertainment news outlets have not only realized and understood how and why the public reads and consumes their media, they have begun to capitalize on it and use it to their advantage. As Dyer puts it, “Stars are manufactured by the music industry to serve a purpose – to make money out of audiences, who respond to various elements of a star persona by buying records and becoming fans” (as cited in Wilson, 2013). The media continually highlights the glamorous world of stardom, making updates incessantly available at our fingertips. Allison Samuels warns:



Because of the mass influx of social-media networks, celebrity blogs, and endless celebrity-based reality shows, Americans have been lulled into a dangerously false sense of intimacy with the people only meant to entertain us. It's allowed us to have detailed opinions on the actions and lives of people who used to be just fleeting and mysterious images in a video or a film. Having "inside" knowledge about stars, their comings and goings, dating habits, and even their shopping choices has somehow made us feel that we share similarities with the faces that flawlessly grace magazine covers, light up the big screen, and sell millions of albums. (2010)

Cleverly titled articles are popping up in magazines, tantalizing the public with the idea that celebrities are "Just Like Us" and do everyday, normal things – including having an occasional fall, taking a casual stroll through the drug store to pick up everyday items, and going to the zoo for a school field trip – in other words, behaving just like ordinary people. Not only does this particular type of coverage work wonders for the celebrity's image, it also allows media outlets to hone in on the consumers' desire to be just like their favorite celebrity, even if that means spending hundreds of dollars on the latest and greatest product. This desire leads to a very profitable business for media outlets and celebs alike, with many running to create their own perfume or shoe line that will hopefully be scooped up by fans dreaming of smelling or dressing like their favorite celebrity. The media does stories on the beauty products used to create the look Katy Perry wore to the Grammy's because brands are willing to pay big bucks for the simple mention of the Revlon lipstick or Dior eye shadow in the magazine, not to mention alongside an A-list celebrity that claims to have used that product to create the red carpet look. Dyer quotes Hortense Powdermaker's anthropological study of Hollywood, which sums up the profit potential of stars:

From a business point of view, there are many advantages in the star system. The star has tangible feature which can be advertised and marketed – a face, a body, a pair of legs, a voice a certain kind of personality, real or synthetic – and can be typed as the wicked villain, the honest hero, the fatal siren, the sweet young girl, the neurotic woman. (p. 11)

Aside from the money aspect of celebrity coverage, entertainment news is also feeding into contemporary surveillance culture, which depends on close self-monitoring and judgment of others. It may seem that the four-page cover story on Angelina Jolie's mothering choices and her latest vacation to Africa is solely to inform an eager-to-know audience about every move of an intriguing celebrity; however, there are other factors at play, which explains why people cannot seem to get enough of the highly-addictive entertainment news. Gorin and Dubied argue in their study of entertainment news that every human being, whether they admit it or not, acts as a machine-like system, constantly monitoring, altering, and assessing their everyday actions to ensure they are at ease with them. The faces and lifestyles plastered on the pages of websites and television screens act as "checks" on these human machines, prompting them to "debug" and "calibrate" their systems in order to eliminate observed flaws.

Celebrities, as Morin puts it in the article written by Gorin and Dubied, act "as role models [in popular culture], as an 'ideology of happiness' . . . [emphasizing] values such as well-being and self-fulfillment through the search for happiness, success, profit, comfort, and youthfulness" (2011, p. 602). People look to stars' lives to judge how they themselves should act. This is not to say that all stars must obtain the same qualities of happiness, because the public needs multiple examples of happiness in order for various and diverse individuals to make decisions about how they will live their lives. Happiness varies for all individuals, with some seeing Britney Spears' poor mothering skills as acceptable, justifying her actions with the

knowledge that she was married at a young age, to an unsupportive spouse. Others may blame Spears and say she is selfish and obnoxious and needs to pull her life together for the well-being of her children. Whatever the consumers' view of Spears' mothering skills, the presentation and framing of Spears' story in the media is the catalyst for individuals to decide how they feel about the issue of mothering in the case of Britney Spears and how they would act in a similar situation (i.e., what would make them "happy").

Julie A. Wilson calls attention to the feminist implications of the media's coverage of stars' lifestyles:

With [media's] endless stream of photos of stunning celebrities on red carpets, fashion dos and don'ts, and diet and exercise tips, the case could easily be made that the casual economy of celebrity magazines works to promote impossible and ever-fluctuating standards of femininity, thereby producing "docile" female bodies. (2010, p. 30)

The way celebrities are presented and the topics covered in terms of both male and female celebrities influences how the female population in general in America chooses to act. For example, seeing stars including Rihanna, Britney Spears, and Miley Cyrus dress in revealing clothes and act in ways considered "promiscuous" can in turn affect female views of this behavior and lead them to believe they too need to act and dress this way in order to be likable and "cool." After Miley Cyrus took the stage at the 2013 MTV Music Video Awards with Robin Thicke and was dancing in a vulgar manner, many parents were furious with MTV, claiming it encouraged their young children to act in sexual ways. MTV argued that it made people watch the show and increased their ratings, providing them with not only income but promotion.

Wilson claims that females have a tendency to use celebrity coverage as a way of determining how they will live their lives and what is acceptable to do in today's day and age.

When reading news coverage of celebrities, the public tends to switch their gaze “back and forth between the star images and the self’s own attitude toward these representations” (2010, p. 32).

When a female picks up a tabloid magazine to read about the latest divorce drama in Katie Holmes and Tom Cruise’s lives, she is reading the details of the story and judging the decisions and actions of both Holmes and Cruise in terms of how she would act in that given situation based on preexisting morals and opinions. If Holmes was seeking sole custody of the daughter she and Cruise share, perhaps the woman reading the article would agree with Holmes’ decision based on her own experience with the father of her children. Perhaps another woman whose children’s dad was an excellent father would disagree with Holmes’ decision and view Holmes under a negative light. Both women’s decisions would be formed under their previous morals and experiences in regards to a similar situation. They would use their own lives to determine if and why they agreed or disagreed with Holmes’ decisions.

Given this tendency to use celebrities to judge one’s own status in the world, the media must take into account what it will show the public and more importantly, *how* it will depict celebrity actions. “Celebrity gossipers [are] less interested in the construction of star personas or intimate knowledge of stars’ souls and more focused on judging celebrity behaviors” (Wilson, 2010, p. 29). Take Britney Spears’ now infamous fall from grace in 2007 – the year she shaved her head, attacked a paparazzo’s car with an umbrella, and was carried out of her house on a stretcher after holding her young son hostage in her home. This was a widely covered event in Hollywood, with Spears’ face on the cover of dozens of magazines for countless weeks with headlines reading “HELP!” featuring Spears’ two sons on the cover looking disheveled and scared, or Spears on a stripper pole with the caption “What If This Were Your Mom?” In fact, Spears’ meltdown was such a popular topic that, as reported by Wilson, her 2007 infamous year

was deemed “the Britney economy” with magazines that covered her earning a combined total of \$360 million and Spears earning the cover spot on *People*, *Us Weekly*, *In Touch*, *Life & Style*, *OK!* and *Star* a whopping 175 times in a 78-week span increasing overall sales by 33 percent (2010).

So why was Spears’ downward spiral and erratic behavior so interesting to the public and so highly covered by entertainment news? For starters she was America’s sweetheart from the moment she graced MTV with her music video in a schoolgirl outfit at the age of sixteen. She sold millions of records worldwide throughout her career and went on to tour in more than three sold out worldwide tours. She had officially become an international sensation and all eyes were on her – especially when she was acting out of character (i.e. her entire 2007 year). Media outlets were more than willing to provide the public with all the juicy details. People were not only judging the behavior and actions of Spears, but also using her behavior and the coverage of it as a way to determine how they would act in those circumstance and why. The readers wanted to question their morals and either agree with their current set of beliefs, or alter them to feel more comfortable with them – all because they saw how one woman acted in the public eye.

## CRITERIA FOR ENTERTAINMENT NEWS

As I have demonstrated, celebrities are a constant presence in today’s world and are prevalent in virtually every aspect of public discourse, and this presence is only growing along with the qualifications and standards of what it means to be a “celebrity.” Dyer states, “The general image of stardom can be seen as a version of the American Dream, organized around the themes of consumption, success and ordinariness . . . however, there is an undertow that . . . ‘sours’ the dream” (2009, p. 35). With the emergence of reality television, more and more people

have access to the idea of becoming famous without the need for “talent” (i.e. acting or singing abilities). But how does the entertainment news industry decide which celebrities are worthy of coverage? What factors play a role in pushing celebrities into the limelight – and keeping them there?

Gorin and Dubied have laid out five main criteria that determine which stories become entertainment news and why. First, entertainment news’ sole focus is on people (i.e. celebrities) “who are dynamic, evolving, narrative-centered icons” (2011, p. 600). They are allowed, even to some extent *expected*, to change and this change is oftentimes accompanied with mass media exposure and coverage, although not always positive (e.g., when a film star acts in a manner that contradicts their screen image). The expected change that results is assumed by many people to be one involving the celebrity undergoing obvious physical evolution in relation to puberty, but as far as emotional and mental changes are concerned, the accepted and commonly held view is that the transformation should be minimal and enacted in a manner that is deemed “role model worthy” and “mature.” When celebrities take on a more sexual and enticing persona, the general public looks down upon this and suddenly begins to wait for a “meltdown” to happen as a result of this new image and persona.

Second, stars have “dual personas” that simultaneously represent “both the ordinary and the extraordinary, the glamour and the vulgarity . . . embodying both the imitable and the inimitable” (Gorin and Dubied, 2011, p. 600). Their public image is ironic and at odds with itself because they have the role of leading the glamorous and over-the-top lifestyle that keeps the public interested (high end fashion, sports cars, extravagant houses, etc.) but at the same time they cannot be so untouchable as to be un-relatable. The public needs to feel a close connection with celebrities, so they must seem like “real people” who live “real lives.”

The third criterion touches on this idea of duality and is the core reason that many entertainment news outlets exist: emphasizing the star's private life and their personal behavior, which further enhances the duality of the star. This is often done via "intrusive pictures taken with concealed, candid cameras, which reveal what is normally kept secret and push the envelope to the limits of propriety" (Gorin and Dubied, 2011, p. 600). Although the star is to be seen as a glamorous being leading an untouchable and highly sought after lifestyle, they can also be highly exposed in terms of their personal lives and choices they make. An example of the glamour being stripped from celebrities is when magazines publish photographs of them wearing no makeup. This displays the star in their most vulnerable form and oftentimes the star appears more realistic and less "beautiful" when they are bare faced and casually dressed. The public views them as any ordinary person versus the perfected image they present when on a red carpet.

This approach may anger celebrities, especially when they feel they are being exploited and/or taken advantage of by the press. Many celebrities struggle with what aspects of their lives they should keep to themselves and what they should share with the public. Oftentimes when a star spends their career publicizing their whole lives and they suddenly choose to keep things to themselves, the media does not respond well because the public has come to expect that every detail of that celebrity's life will be reported to them. The Kardashian family has made a name for themselves by selling their private moments and personal lives to the public so when Kim Kardashian recently had a baby with mega-star rapper Kanye West, the paparazzi and entertainment news outlets went ballistic in their attempt to capture the first photograph of the baby and present all the details about the birth. Kardashian received a lot of scrutiny when she held out on these details and did not release a photograph right away, with people arguing that she sold out every other aspect of her life. They almost felt it was not fair and it did not make

sense that she would keep the birth of her daughter so private. Because the media became accustomed to covering every detail of her life, they expected the pregnancy and birth to be no different and persisted in their attempt to cover the event regardless of pleas from Kardashian and West to respect their privacy. The public and media alike almost felt a sense of betrayal from Kardashian for keeping this moment in her life private.

The fourth criterion of entertainment news coverage involves putting attributes of the star on display, including their style and fashion sense, the lifestyle they lead, and luxurious or over-the-top behaviors that set them apart from normal people. It differs from the third criterion in the sense that this is where the actual objects and things the person owns are put on display rather than their behavior and life choices. This is why reporters at award shows often ask the question “Who are you wearing?” and this is the criterion that requires media to cover the over-the-top vacation of a celebrity with details on all finances involved in the trip and images of the luxurious hotel suite the celebrity stayed in during their visit.

Dyer explains how fashion and appearance serve as a focal point because they act as a “function a star serves . . . to fix a type of beauty, to help a physical type identify itself. Clearly types of beauty define *norms* of attractiveness” (2009, p. 14). When a celebrity chooses to drastically change the way they look, most notably with weight loss or gain, the media usually presses hard to find out why and how they did it. Jessica Simpson has made headlines the past two years for her dramatic weight gain and quick weight loss during and after the birth of her two children. This ultimately led her to land a sponsorship with Weight Watchers, a popular dieting program for both men and women. Without the press coverage of her weight and the public’s interest in how she lost the weight, Weight Watchers would most likely never offered her the high paying deal because she would not have garnered attention and customers for their



program. Entertainment news coverage provided Simpson the platform to be presented with this deal.

The fifth and final criterion is that entertainment news items are produced and reported “according to specific media procedures . . . categorized as news because journalists write them according to a set of principles, the recording of facts and documentary evidence” (Gorin and Dubied, 2011, p. 601). This gives entertainment news legitimacy and credibility. Some outlets, such as tabloid magazines, may be at odds with this standard, especially when celebrities claim accusations and/or stories are false. Celebrities are protective of their images. As Dyer argues, “[A] star’s persona . . . as depicted in terms of character and personality, is a fragile thing which needs constant nurturing, and is the product of constant discourse between the star and his or her audience” (as cited in Wilson, 2013).

## CASE STUDY: MAXIMO TV

For the case study portion of this thesis I will take a look at Maximo TV and how their process of collecting, reporting, and distributing entertainment news stories and footage of celebrities relates to the scholarly research I discussed above, especially Gorin and Dubied’s criteria. First, I provide a historical background of Maximo TV and how the company was started along with its goal and purpose. I also detail the typical process involved in the creation of entertainment news stories and the standards used to determine who and what to cover. In the next section I describe the daily operations of Maximo TV, including my role within the company and what I observed in both the office setting where the editing and voice-overs are done as well as at the various events attended by staff. In section three, I take an in-depth look at how Maximo TV’s news collecting process compares with the five criteria set forth by Gorin and

Dubied in determining which celebrities and events become entertainment news and which are ignored and/or considered of minimal interest to the public. My discussion and analysis are based on my direct experiences during my time as an intern at Maximo TV during the summer of 2013 and informal interviews I conducted with the staff, including producer Enrique Damacén and other interns.

## I. HISTORY AND MISSION

Producer Enrique (Rico) Damacén founded Maximo TV in 2003 after becoming interested in videography, specifically as it related to social events and public relations in the entertainment industry. After moving to Los Angeles from his homeland of Peru, he bartended to pay his living expenses while he worked on selling and marketing his skills as a DJ (disk jockey) for night clubs and private events. While occasionally landing gigs working as a DJ for various clubs and events in Hollywood and surrounding cities, he was able to network with people in the field of entertainment news and public relations. After speaking with a club owner about his passion for photography and videotaping, the owner offered Damacén a job compiling footage for an upcoming event of his and editing it into a promotional video for the club to use in the future. Damacén agreed and after filming the event he began getting notice for his work. Eventually, he was earning enough money through his video taping jobs that he no longer bartended or DJed, allowing him to focus solely on his career in shooting publicity footage.

Slowly Damacén began attending red carpet events in the Los Angeles area. He would shoot “B-roll” (no audio, simply raw footage of a celebrity walking the red carpet with several zooms in and out of the person and tilting up and down to showcase their attire). He then posted the footage on websites where various entertainment news outlets bought footage of celebrities

for their broadcasts and websites. Damacen's work began to sell; soon, his material was being used by well-known media outlets, including E! Entertainment and Access Hollywood. Once this footage became a main source of income for him, he no longer produced recordings for clubs and promoters and instead focused on celebrity news coverage and red carpet events. He wanted to sell his footage under a legitimate company name and brand his work, so he decided to create Maximo TV.

## II. DAILY OPERATIONS

Damacen decided it would benefit the company to begin introducing internships at Maximo TV, which would be offered to various college students eager to gain more experience in the field of media and broadcasting. Because he was the primary person working for his company and he did not have the financial capabilities to pay employees to work for him, unpaid interns were his best option. He sought students that could do reporting, editing, script writing, and/or handle the cameras and equipment. I served as an intern at Maximo TV from July to September of 2013.

My first week at Maximo TV consisted of training exercises and getting to know how everything was run and operated. Damacen and two other interns who were working as reporters (they had already been with the company for a month prior to my arrival) assisted in the training exercises and in ensuring I was comfortable and well versed in regards to my duties. I was taught how to handle and operate all camera and audio equipment, conducted a "mock interview" with one of the interns to work on my on-camera presence and gestures, and reviewed various footage of reporters from Maximo TV and other entertainment news outlets with Damacen. He taught me what a good and bad interview look like and how to conduct good interviews. Damacen provided

me with celebrity names and expected me to research them as I would prior to any interview with a celebrity and come up with questions I would ask them on the red carpet. I had to write three scripts and record voice-overs so Damacen could train me how to use my voice properly on camera and during voice-overs. I was also invited to red carpet events to observe the other reporters in action and take notes on what I needed to do when it was my turn to report on the carpet. Once the preliminary training was complete and Damacen felt comfortable with my skills, he allowed me to report on the red carpet.

Prior to the events I would be reporting on, my duties consisted of researching the celebrities expected to attend as well as learning about the event itself and the history and purpose behind it. I was then expected to attend the red carpet events and conduct interviews with celebrities. I was trained on how to conduct interviews that were both interesting and appropriate as well as ones that generated up-to-date and relevant information that the public might want to know about. My producer explained to me that the public does not want to watch interviews where the celebrity answers frequently asked questions such as “What are you wearing?” “What’s your latest project?” “How did you like the film?” Damacen also taught me very early in my internship that I needed to hone in on the scandals and not-so-talked about aspects of that celebrity’s life. He wanted me to not only touch on topics that were currently of interest to the public, but to also investigate and possibly generate new information that could become relevant and enticing. If I were interviewing a previous contestant on the reality dating show *The Bachelor*, it would be unacceptable for me to ask simply what their experience was like on the show. Not only have they most likely already answered this question countless other times, but also their answers will likely be very vague and nothing interesting that would make viewers pay attention or continue watching the interview. Rather, my producer taught me to ask

the scandalous questions and the ones that most news outlets do not ask but the ones the public wants answered. He wanted me to word my questions in a way that provoked the celebrity to answer in an interesting and thought-provoking manner. For example, rather than asking, “What was it like being on *The Bachelor*?” I would ask, “What was it like living with (so and so) when the two of you didn’t get along? Do you think that affected your experience on the show?”

For every event Damacen covers, he is required – along with all the other press sources – to obtain press credentials prior to the event that simply state he has been approved to cover that specific event and a spot is reserved for his camera on the red carpet. Damacen started Maximo TV over 10 years ago and because he has been in the business for a while, he has been able to network and get to know numerous publicists and public relations people, in turn allowing him to gain access to more high profile events. Consequently, he is given the opportunity to attend events that are more likely to host A-list celebrities and shoot footage that entertainment news outlets will most likely want to purchase. The relevant stars of the moment are more likely to attend the higher profile events because their star power allows them to be in demand. They have created an image that many events and promoters want to exploit. This is another reason why stars need to be careful to manage and maintain the image they desire or they will lose their credibility in the industry and the opportunities it provides (i.e. appearances, sponsorships, movie roles, etc.).

At Maximo TV the primary location where business is conducted when staff and interns are not attending red carpets is at a studio located in downtown Hollywood. The studio contains all the camera and sound equipment used to shoot the footage as well as two computers. One computer is used for researching celebrities and events prior to events to generate questions to ask, to look up topics to write stories about and research them, to write scripts for voice-overs, to

update social media websites including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and the company's blog, or any other task needed to be completed by the staff at Maximo TV to ensure the success of the business. The second computer is used for processing footage, including editing, recording voice-overs, mixing sound, adjusting video quality, etc. The staff and interns meet at the studio on a regular basis and the interns are expected to have new story ideas and fresh content to contribute to the company.

Once in a while, a story package is created when Damacen feels it will be worth the effort put into editing and producing it. Because Maximo TV primarily makes its income through footage only (no audio), the company is very cautious with the time and effort they put into interviews and stories they publish. When a story is to be created, the staff compiles and edits relevant footage of the celebrities mentioned in the story, types out a script for the voice-over, records the voice-over, and then publishes the story on all social media and websites. The purpose of these stories and interviews is to generate more attention for and followers of the company, which in turn makes the company more popular and heightens the chances of entertainment news outlets using their footage. An example of a story that would be edited and published to the site would be something the public finds especially interesting and intriguing. As discussed in the research portion of this essay, scandals are a very popular and sought after subject. If there is a high-profile scandal happening that has captured the attention of the public, Maximo TV will most likely capitalize on this interest as a way to draw more viewers to their website.

The environment of Maximo TV varies drastically when the company attends events and red carpets to shoot B-roll and/or conduct interviews. The events can be anywhere in the state of California (some even take place in Las Vegas, Nevada) and as long as the event is worthy of

coverage and popular stars are expected to attend, Maximo TV will travel the distance (more on how Maximo TV determines relevance and importance will be discussed later). Prior to an event, Damacen gathers all cameras and audio equipment necessary and has all interns attending the event show up an hour and a half before the event to give them time to prepare their questions and ensure all equipment works efficiently. The interns are expected to read the “tip sheet” that is emailed a few days in advance (the tip sheet states which celebrities are expected to attend as well as giving a brief explanation about the event and its purpose). The intern that is conducting the interviews on camera must have unique questions prepared for the event for all celebrities the company intends to interview.

Once at the event, the producer and intern in charge of shooting the footage set up their cameras and test that they are working properly. This involves powering on the camera and turning the light on, testing the audio and microphone (if necessary), adjusting the colors of the images using a “white balance,” and adjusting the focus so the quality of the image is not blurry and they are in high definition. Finally, the tripod (if necessary) is set up and adjusted to the appropriate height. On occasion, the interns that are reporting for the event will record an introduction which will later precede any footage shot at the event. This usually consists of the reporter recording a greeting, mentioning the event, and following with a closing statement encouraging viewers to stay tuned for all the interviews.

Once the event begins and celebrities are walking the red carpet, the cameramen are constantly on alert, making sure to shoot all celebrities and guests they feel should be recorded, based on their popularity at that time. If the producer feels a celebrity should be interviewed, he will notify the reporter in advance, giving them plenty of time to review their questions and prepare to be on-camera. The producer determines if a celebrity should be interviewed using

various standards which include whether or not the celebrity is well known (i.e. the Kardashians), if they have a new project in the works that will interest the public (i.e. the new season of a reality show is being filmed, an artist has a new album coming out, etc.), or the star has a loyal fan base that is always interested in the star whether or not they are currently working on anything (see discussion of Stana Katic below).

After the event is over and the red carpet is closed, the producer and interns pack up the equipment and head back to the studio where they upload, edit, and publish all of the footage the same night the event was held. This is done to ensure the footage is published while it is still “fresh” and “interesting.” If the producer waits too long to publish the footage, it is no longer worth anything because the chances are likely that the celebrities they shot have already attended another event where newer footage of them has been filmed.

The process of determining what people and events to cover and why involves a decision-making process that Damacen developed via “trial and error” over the years. About a week or two prior to the event publicists send out an email invitation to all press outlets to invite them to apply for press credentials that would allow them to cover the event. Because there is an excessive number of events held every week and it would be impossible for Maximo TV to cover them all, I asked Damacen how he determined which events he would cover. Damacen informed me that he covers events where several celebrities have RSVPed and there is an overwhelmingly good chance that at least one, if not most, of the expected high-profile celebrities will attend. But if there are only one or two mediocre names on the tip sheet and he has other events he could cover that night with more of a chance of obtaining marketable footage, he will not bother attending because it would be a waste of his time.



Another factor that comes into play when determining which events Damacen covers and which ones he does not deals with the relevance of the attending celebrities in today's entertainment news industry. Their relevance can be determined by several factors, including a scandal they are currently linked to, a new high profile romance, a constant and prevailing presence in the news media do to their relative success in their given industry (i.e. Justin Bieber, Jennifer Aniston, Ben Affleck) – meaning there is no particular crisis or celebration occurring in their life at that moment in time, the public simply cares about them because of the level of fame they have achieved – or a highly anticipated new project they have coming out in the near future (i.e. a new reality show, a new album, a new film they are starring in, a new clothing line, etc.).

For example, if any member of the Kardashian family was rumored to be attending an event, Damacen would cover that event because there is such a high interest in that family and the footage almost always sells and generates a lot of views. However, if an event were expected to have a lot of B-list celebrities and lesser-known people in attendance, he would skip it. An example of this type of celebrity would be any of the past Playmates from the men's magazine *Playboy* or the stars of a long-term reality television show with many seasons and cast members. Because MTV's popular reality show *The Real World* has had almost thirty seasons over the past twenty years, over 200 cast members have appeared on the show. Therefore, there is no lack of people from the show who could possibly attend an event and the countless appearance made collectively between all the cast members makes them "a dime a dozen" so to speak. But if a particular cast member is expected to show up and they have recently gotten divorced and have made headlines for dating a much younger man, Damacen will cover that event because the footage will generate views – especially if the younger man shows up with the cast member.

An example of an event generating buzz and press worthy footage I observed was hosted by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) at a nightclub to promote two of their newest campaign models who were relatively unknown women that had once appeared in the pages of *Playboy* magazine and had since dwindled from the spotlight, lacking significant relevance in the media. None of the press there were necessarily hoping to cover the event or interview the two models; they were there because of one guest in particular who was rumored to be expected to attend the event. Reality star Khloe Kardashian-Odom and her NBA playing husband Lamar Odom were going through a rough patch in their marriage; there was a rumor that he was to be entering rehab for drug abuse and a divorce was looming in the near future. Odom was also rumored to have been having an affair and his mistress had just stepped forward and confessed their romance to the media a few days prior to the PETA event. The press was ecstatic when they found out that one of the mistresses was expected to attend the event. Chances are likely that this mistress would have not generated any buzz prior to her association with the high profile couple and her alleged role in the downfall of their marriage. The woman was relevant because she had made headlines and people were interested in this alleged affair that Odom was having; they wanted to know more about the woman behind it.

Another example of the relevance a star has in the current media playing a role in the coverage the star gets – including Maximo TV – was when Damacen sent me and another intern to cover an event where a French reality star was expected to be filming her new show. Nabilla Benattia is unknown in the United States but has a fan-base in Europe that is equivalent to the fan base of the Kardashian family and therefore media outlets and fans overseas have a lot interest in any coverage of Benattia. While at the event, my boss made sure we got footage of the star while she walked the red carpet as well as an interview with her describing her latest reality

show and her newest projects overseas. Because Benattia is known for her curvaceous figure and voluptuous behind, my boss assured we shot plenty of footage of her spinning and twirling on the red carpet. The footage and interview we compiled were tailored to meet the desires of the public. Damacen did his research and knew what the star was known for prior to the event and then used this knowledge as a selling point for his footage – asking her to turn around and show her famous curves and asking her questions that would generate the beloved “ditzzy” and “outlandish” responses she was known for giving.

After noticing the relatively low numbers of followers Maximo TV had on social media sites – specifically Twitter – Damacen agreed to let me take over their Twitter feed and act as their social media manager during my time with the company. Through Maximo TV’s Twitter account I sent out tweets notifying followers of upcoming events Maximo TV would be covering as well as the expected celebrities attending. I also posted all footage shot of stars and I tagged the celebrities in the tweets in they hopes they would “retweet” to their own Twitter accounts, potentially helping us advertise the footage. I also posted comments and opinions about relevant news stories and invited followers to interact with Maximo TV and offer their own opinions and thoughts on the topic. For example, when Chris Brown was sentenced to anger management rehabilitation, I posted “Chris Brown sentenced to anger management. Given his past what do you agree/disagree? Why?” This allowed fans to not only get the Maximo TV name out there by tweeting at us, but also encouraged them to check out the website and other social media sites for more topics of conversation and footage of their favorite stars.

Through my position an intern, I was able to get insight into what celebrity coverage generated more attention for Maximo TV, based on the messages fans sent to the company regarding footage and information posted about various celebrities. If Maximo TV tweeted about

a certain celebrity and instantly gained a lot of attention for the tweet, I would inform Damacen and when he attended events where that star was present, he made sure to get extra footage of that star to feed the desires of his followers and the high volume of people who expressed interest in that celebrity. One example of this was when Maximo TV sent out a tweet that they would be covering an event where Stana Katic was expected to attend and hundreds of people expressed interest and excitement over the coverage of this celebrity. I relayed this information to Damacen while he was at the event and he made sure to take plenty of photographs of her and obtain plenty of video footage. I also posted all photos and video as soon as possible, while the followers were still anxiously anticipating more coverage of Katic from Maximo TV.

### III. ANALYSIS

Gorin and Dubied have identified five criteria that are critical in determining which entertainment news celebrities are relevant and how and why they are covered by media outlets. Maximo TV takes all five factors into account when deciding who and what to cover and what will be worth their time to cover based on the income and attention the footage will generate. The main goal of Maximo TV is to obtain views and to generate people's interest in their footage and the stories they choose to cover and publish. They cover people who are relevant in today's media and ask questions that will elicit answers the public wants to hear.

The first criterion states that entertainment news outlets cover people who are real and dynamic. These people are allowed and almost expected to change. An extreme transformation, such as a "celebrity meltdown," can violate a star's persona but also be of dramatic interest to fans. When Maximo TV decides whom to cover, they select people of interest to the public at that moment in time. When meltdowns are at the beginning stages or in full swing in a

celebrity's life, these news stories generate the most buzz and attention for Maximo TV. A celebrity on the verge of a meltdown fascinates the public and Damacen knows this so he is careful to cover any and all events where these celebrities are expected, even if the chance of that celebrity showing up is not guaranteed.

“The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills” reality star Adrienne Maloof was of interest during the summer and fall of 2013 because of the scandal surrounding her divorce, including abuse allegations and rumors of infidelity. The public wanted the latest updates on Maloof's divorce case because there were so many secrets and tribulations that were being uncovered and revealed. To add to the hysteria surrounding Maloof and her estranged ex-husband, she stepped out with a much younger new boyfriend who was also the son of famous musician Rod Stewart. At one point, Maloof was scheduled to walk the red carpet at a charity fundraising event and the entertainment news industry was ready to cover her, with high hopes that her new boyfriend would also attend the event. When she showed up, much to the press's pleasant surprise, her boyfriend was at her side and they were kissing and posing for the cameras.

Although there is typically nothing wrong with the dating choices a single woman makes, the reason the public was interested in Maloof's dating life and questioned the morality of it was because she was recently divorced and the new man was half her age. The public claimed her dating choices were an attempt at rebounding from her failed marriage and they felt she was living vicariously through her much younger boyfriend. They also questioned her motives in dating him and wondered if it was an act of spite directed towards her ex-husband, done to ignite jealous anger. A meltdown seemed to be in the works and the public was watching it unfold, waiting for Maloof to fall apart following her disastrous divorce case. There was a lot of scandal

and controversy surrounding her life at that point in time and the public wanted all coverage of her that the media was able to get.

The second criterion states that stars have “dual personalities” and they represent “both the ordinary and the extraordinary,” meaning the public wants to see celebrities in the spotlight wearing their designer gowns and living their lavish lifestyle but they also want to know celebrities are ordinary people similar to those not in the spotlight and are capable of compassion and empathy towards those less fortunate than they. Although Maximo TV does not use this criterion in the sense of invading the stars’ private lives by taking private footage of them (Maximo TV only covers red carpets and hosted events), they do touch on it slightly when conducting interviews. As stated previously, the questions that Damacen encourages and expects reporters to ask fall outside the “business only” realm and push the lines in terms of the public life the celebrity is willing to put on display and the personal matters they would rather keep to themselves.

The public enjoys observing the life of the rich and famous in close proximity, which is made possible through the extensive and oftentimes invasive media coverage of the press. Paparazzi follow celebrities’ every move and invade their privacy in an attempt to snap candid photographs of their personal and private environments. The public enjoys seeing celebrities in their everyday lives doing “normal” things that ordinary people also do and because of this desire, the media must keep up with demand. To do so, the media forces their camera lenses into those moments celebrities are not necessarily willing or eager to share. For example, when a celebrity is at the beach with her family and simply wants to relax and enjoy their time together, they are often plagued with the worry that paparazzi are around and will invade their personal space. This is also evident when celebrities are out shopping and they have to constantly enter

through back doors of buildings and dodge paparazzi as their bodyguards escort them through crowds of people hoping to get a close up view of the star.

An example of using media to cover the duality of stars and show how they are real people under all the glamour and experience similar life events as we ordinary people do was when I was interviewing a recent winner of the reality show *The Bachelor*, Desiree Hartsock, and her fiancé, Chris Siegfried, and Damacen repeatedly told me prior to the interview to ask them when they were having a baby. He stated his reasoning for doing so was because the public is always interested in celebrities when they are pregnant or having a newborn baby. People want to know every detail of the pregnancy, birth, and rearing of the child and entertainment news is their source for this information. Although most celebrities tend to keep this news private for as long as possible, especially the first trimester when complications can occur, my producer was hoping to generate an answer from the couple that would get the audience's interest and stir the pot of rumors in relation to a potential new child from the young couple. He wanted me to bring up a topic during the interview that would get the public talking.

This helps demonstrate the “ordinariness” of stars (in this case the newly engaged couple's views on children in their future), as childbirth and/or parenting are experiences that most people will have at one point in their lives. To see someone of celebrity status go through this very human process is reassuring. It is interesting and somewhat pleasurable to see a person that is idolized and highly sought after experience a moment so fundamental and personal such as childbirth. The public is also interested in knowing all the decisions made in regards to the child. Provided this information, the public will generate opinions and judgments about the celebrity's actions and choices based on their own experiences, choices, morals, beliefs, etc.

The third criterion is closely linked to the second one and states that emphasizing stars' private lives and their personal decisions in relation to the lifestyles they lead further enhances their duality. Much of what goes into determining which celebrities and events to cover is related to the stories those celebrities have been generating in the news in regards to both their professional and personal life choices at that point in time. This is the essential reason that entertainment news outlets exist. If the public did not care about the private lives of celebrities outside of their work life and the projects they take on, it would change the dynamic and rules in regard to what celebrities Maximo TV covers. Rather than covering those celebrities with scandal and stories behind their names, Maximo TV would most likely cover any celebrity who was about to undertake a new project. Thus, Maximo TV would have to alter its production process and content significantly – if it was even able to generate enough income to survive.

Although there are no blatant examples of Maximo TV covering the private lives of celebrities to garner attention and feed into the public's wants, there are a few instances that are loosely related to this criterion. When interviewing Lisa Vanderpump, reality star from "The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills," I asked her questions about a highly controversial affair that caused the demise of co-star Brandi Glanville's marriage. Glanville's husband and father to her two sons was cheating on her during their marriage with the famed songstress LeAnn Rimes. Rumors were surrounding their affair and speculation and disgust for the infidelity appeared in countless entertainment news stories. Glanville tended to avoid the subject by all means possible and when interviewing Vanderpump, I was hoping to get some new information on the subject to feed the appetite of the public and generate attention for the interview.

Information about the personal lives of celebrities can be hard to come by, as many celebrities choose to keep their private lives confidential and separate from their professional



careers and public image, regardless of the public's interest in the details of their private lives. But sharing such details can be an important part of a star's persona. When Glanville went through the all-too-familiar situation of experiencing infidelity, it humbled and humanized her. It allowed the public to see her in a different light, one that was less planned out and carefully constructed. She was going through something that was less than desirable and seeing her struggle to keep her family afloat and protect her two young children through the whole ordeal created public empathy for the star.

According to the fourth criterion, entertainment news must put attributes of the star on display involving their fashion choices, the lifestyle they lead, including the vacations they take and activities in which they engage, material objects they own (i.e. cars, houses, private jets, clothing, jewelry, yachts, etc.), and anything else setting them apart from those less privileged (a.k.a the public). This criterion is another one not heavily focused on at Maximo TV, due to the purpose of the footage they obtain and the means by which they obtain it. Maximo TV's goal is not to produce content that takes an inside look at celebrities' private lives necessarily; rather, they shoot footage of celebrities at public appearances and red carpet events and this footage is later used by larger entertainment news outlets to act as B-roll while a story about that celebrity is appearing on the screen. However, this does not eliminate this criterion from Maximo TV's realm altogether. When determining which celebrities to shoot and which to avoid, Maximo TV must consider the stories entertainment news outlets are covering at that point in time and which celebrities' private lives and lifestyle choices are being focused on so they shoot footage of stars that entertainment outlets want to cover.

When shooting B-roll of a particular celebrity on the red carpet, especially females, Damacen will have the cameraman do a "fashion shot" in which they tilt up and down and show

the outfit the celebrity is wearing from head to toe. Although the question about what a celebrity is wearing is generally avoided when conducting interviews for Maximo TV, my producer did inform the reporters that if a celebrity is wearing something unusual or outrageous or they are wearing clothes from a clothing line they have created or are sponsored by and it would be appropriate for them to talk about then it is fine to discuss what they are wearing. If a celebrity recently bought an outrageous property or new home and there is heightened interest and speculation about it due to its unusual or over-the-top characteristics, this would be another instance where the lifestyle of that celebrity in regards to their private life would be relevant and worthy of coverage.

Even though Maximo TV is not directly responsible for capturing the candid moments of celebrities private lives outside their public appearances, the images and information collected from the outlets that do cover their private lives influences the celebrities Maximo TV is interested in and the questions they ask in interviews. The paparazzi generally collect footage of the private lives of celebrities and they work directly with media outlets to ensure they are seeking footage that is relevant and sought after by entertainment news. They are also able to discover new information capable of generating mass public interest and speculation (i.e. when actress Kristen Stewart was photographed kissing a married movie director while she was still in a relationship with fellow actor Robert Pattinson). Maximo TV works to further enhance this interest in a specific celebrity's private life by providing even more coverage and information on the topic when they cover events by either shooting footage for media outlets to use or conducting interviews in which they directly ask that celebrity about the recent subject of interest surrounding their personal lifestyle.

An example of this I experienced at Maximo TV was when notorious celebrity Courtney Stodden was hosting an event sponsored by PETA and she showed up in a bikini made solely of lettuce to promote the vegan hotdogs created by the company. Stodden first entered the public eye when she married 51-year-old actor Doug Hutchinson when she was only 16 years old. She has managed to maintain her fame and the public's interest by creating a star image that is promiscuous, and pushes the boundaries of what is considered appropriate for a female her age. She gives interviews in which she displays unusual and oftentimes "uncomfortable to watch" behavior. She uses the decisions made in her private life and the lifestyle she chooses to lead in order to sell her image to the public. This includes being spotted shopping with her husband while wearing revealing clothing or posting videos to her social media sites showing her dancing in a provocative way for her husband. She puts her private moments on display and showcases her lifestyle choices (i.e. scandalous fashion choices, decisions made in her marriage to her much older husband, causes and events she supports, etc.) in order to garner more attention and interest in herself and remain in the public eye.

Although the event I attended was to promote the ethical treatments of animals, my producer was not interested in me conducting an interview about the event and helping to promote the cause at hand. He did not want me to find out why Stodden supports PETA and their vegan hotdogs. He wanted me to ask her about an alleged pornographic movie deal that was in the works and her latest song along, with a much-speculated-about music video. The public was not interested in an interview with Stodden to hear her political and moral views on animal abuse; they wanted to know what new project she was undertaking and how it would shock everyone.

The fifth criterion says news items are produced and reported “according to specific media procedures . . . categorized as news because journalists write them according to a set of principles, the recording of facts, and documentary evidence.” This supports the idea that entertainment news outlets create stories about a celebrity and frame them in a way that suggests they are legitimate news items. In turn, celebrities need to ensure they are represented correctly and accurately in the media. When conducting interviews, Maximo TV is responsible for and should be aware of the persona of that celebrity they are recording, both when the reporter asks the questions and later when the footage is being edited.

Oftentimes, the information the reporter wants to find out for Maximo TV and the information that the celebrity is willing to share are at odds with one another. If the reporter only asks basic questions about the celebrity’s newest project and touches on subjects the celebrity has clearly been comfortable talking about in the past, the celebrity will most likely approve of the interview because it will gain more attention for the topics and areas the celebrity desires. However, if a star does an interview with Maximo TV that is based solely on their scandalous life when the celebrity had the intention of promoting their newest project, the star will probably not be too pleased. On the reverse side, Maximo TV will benefit because they have more coverage of that scandal and answers about it from the celebrity themselves, which will help feed the appetite of the public in regards to information about that celebrity.

When Maximo TV takes the time to write scripts for stories they feel are highly important given the current interest surrounding them, the process, as suggested by the fifth criterion, is a careful one that is based on presenting accurate, definite evidence. When writing a script for a story about the recent movies that Ryan Reynolds had been the star actor in, I was reminded by my boss to do my research and use as many facts as possible and back up my

statements with evidentiary support to strengthen my argument. While working on the script, I researched all three movies that would be discussed in my story and used box office rankings and profits reported by the theaters to support my claim that the recent three films Reynolds starred in were unsuccessful compared to the “hype” and excitement surrounding them prior to their release. By ensuring the information I would be reporting was accurate, I was able to create a story that would seem “newsworthy” and classified as journalism according to Gorin and Dubied, thus adding to its credibility.

## CONCLUSION

As we have seen, Gorin and Dubied’s five criteria are evident in the process that Maximo TV follows when it identifies potential subjects of its footage and interviews. But is there a more fundamental dynamic at work? More specifically, is coverage driven by producer initiative or public demand? Do we care about celebrity marriages because we find them irresistibly romantic – and a potential blueprint for our own lives – or are we interested in celebrity marriages because entertainment news chooses to cover them on a regular basis?

Maximo TV is one of many entertainment news media outlets that exists to provide celebrity coverage to the public. Maximo TV seeks out celebrities and events that will bring attention and, in turn, profit. Arguably, without the public’s interest in the topics and people covered, Maximo would not be able to sell its footage. If demand drives production, then Maximo needs to pay attention to current trends and topics of interest. Because Miley Cyrus has obtained a lot of media attention and interest in her doings lately, Maximo TV would want to cover anything related to Cyrus and get as much interaction with and footage of her as possible. Presumably, that footage will sell because the public wants to see it.

On the other hand, if producers of entertainment news drive consumption, then Maximo TV does not necessarily have to pay attention to the trends of today and should be able to attend any event, try to shoot interesting and unique interviews of any celebrities they encounter, and sell that footage to media outlets. They could interview an up-and-coming star and generate answers that would be considered “funny,” “outrageous,” “off-the-wall,” or just plain “controversial” and this would make people pay attention to the footage and want to know more about that celebrity. Because Maximo TV is a smaller company and obtains their income based on the footage they sell to media outlets, they are not going to take any chances by trying to gain coverage for a celebrity that is not already popular. Rather, they will cover those celebrities that are guaranteed to bring in income for the company – allowing public demand rather than producer initiative to determine who and what they cover.

Maximo TV is part of a larger system: the star system, which uses mass media to generate intimate connections between celebrities and their fans. Alexander Walker has explained the public’s interest in celebrities and their lifestyles and choices:

Until the camera got close enough to record the player’s own personality, the film star could not emerge from the stage group . . . by isolating and concentrating the player’s looks and personality sometimes unconnected with his or her abilities it was to be the decisive break with stage convention, the most potent means of establishing an artists’ uniqueness and the beginning of the dynamic psychological interplay of the filmgoers’ and the film actors’ emotions. (as cited in Dyer, 2009, p. 15)

Maximo TV is a small element of the massive “dynamic psychological interplay” that is necessary in the creation and maintenance of celebrities. As Walker points out, the audience has now gotten to know celebrities and entertainers on a more personal level than ever before due to

the continual coverage that entertainment news provides. Maximo TV exists to bring the public insider access to their favorite celebrities and promote the causes and events celebrities attend and support. The public is curious for information about stars' lives, media outlets provide it, and the public responds with a desire for even more information.

Thus, celebrity news is a self-reinforcing cycle, although the public's preferences and predilections are the driving force. Maximo TV takes note of stories that are relevant at the moment and shoots footage of those celebrities involved. Given the strong curiosity surrounding especially personal details of a celebrity's life, issues inevitably arise between the media and the celebrities they cover in terms of boundaries between what is allowed to be put on display and what deserves sensitivity and respect. But such boundaries will always be determined by profit potential, which should come as no surprise, given that Maximo TV is a business and therefore revenue driven.

I predict that the entertainment news industry will change dramatically in the future, as it attempts to keep up with the increasingly insatiable appetite the public has for celebrity news coverage. With the growing demands for more content comes hard work to generate the in-depth and detail-oriented information that the public has come to expect, information that goes beyond (and behind) what celebrities make available on their Twitter or Facebook posts. The audience has been given insider access to celebrities and they want this link not only continued in the future, but expanded as well. I feel the public will be introduced to more entertainment news outlets that are solely based online. Existing and future news outlets also will continue to use social media to expand their presence and attract more followers and customers who can then consume the "insider information" on offer. It is an easy, cheap, and successful way for media companies to connect with the public and advertise the coverage they have available. The desire

for entertainment news coverage will not dwindle, and media outlets will constantly need to adjust the way they cover celebrities and distribute news.



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