The role of the media in determining fashion in Perth: A study in cultural ambiguity

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THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN DETERMINING FASHION IN PERTH:
A STUDY IN CULTURAL AMBIGUITY.

BY

Kerry Giles : Bachelor of Arts

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for
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THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN DETERMINING FASHION IN PERTH: A STUDY IN CULTURAL AMBIGUITY.

This study is contextualised within the international fashion framework. The notion of core and periphery has been established in preparation of the application to the local context. The practice of mimicry is examined. This has involved the comparison of global trends with the Perth market. The examination of the fashion condition focuses on the sources of inspiration. Core areas in which fashion concepts are created are identified and their relevance to the Perth fashion scene established. Post-colonial cultural theory has been applied as a critique of fashion in a marginal area.

Sources of visual and written media have been identified and critically evaluated to establish how they impose on Perth as a peripheral fashion location. The practical application of media patterns and fashion trends has been an integral concern in establishing the notion of the double bind. It is the double bind condition which highlights the ambiguous relationship between media and fashion.
Consumption patterns have been examined in order to further reinforce the prevalence of the ambiguities synonymous with the notion of the double bind. The relationship between media and fashion as a consumption industry has been illustrated through case studies.

The body of the text is concerned with the application of the localised study within a theoretical framework. A conceptual analysis of fashion has been applied in order to identify the relevant factors.

The concluding argument seeks to establish that a peripheral location such as Perth is subject to greater ambiguities than the more notorious core areas. The paper also establishes that socio-economic factors influence the conditions which determine an ambiguous status.
I certify that this thesis does not incorporate, without acknowledgment, any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Kerry Giles
PREFACE

My interest in studying the relationship between media and fashion in Perth has been to establish a connection between the major areas in which I have been involved for the past twelve years. Prior to commencing my degree in Media Studies, I had experienced various aspects of the local fashion scene. My working career was initiated through employment within small commercial boutiques. After completing a two year period of managing an established fashion outlet in the city, I was employed to take charge of a boutique which catered to subcultural style. Through this experience, I was motivated to open my own shop.

_Creme Soda_ was situated in the city and specialized in locally produced 'street fashion' for younger adults of both genders. My aim was to provide a retail outlet for Perth designers to establish their careers, and a 'venue' which would function separately to the mandates imposed by commercial fashion enterprises. Through owning this establishment, I gained experience in fashion design, manufacture and promotion. The organization of fashion parades and photographic sessions became a major requirement. The business was a retail
outlet for national and international journals, magazines and locally produced newsletters and broadsheets of interest to youth.

A partnership was eventually established between local designer Ray Costarella, who had been lured away from his studies in architecture. Ray Costarella is now an established identity within the local and national fashion scene, and has transferred the business to Raine Square, Perth, where it operates under the name of Chapter 2. My thanks must be extended to him for the information he provided.

Thanks must also be extended to Minniko and Giovani Carlini from Jonetsu Japan whose knowledge of the international fashion market proved to be invaluable.

Special thanks must go to Brian Shoesmith who has put in hours of work as my supervisor. His guidance and support have been most appreciated.
INTRODUCTION

Behind the multi-disciplinary composition of media is a network of industries which contribute to the complex interface of cultural influence. Technology has shifted the emphasis on communication from the printed and spoken word to an obsession with image. Competitive fashion markets have been established with the introduction of the new electronic technologies. The sophisticated network of the fashion industry provides a compelling new factor in the world economy. Fashion imagery serves as a primary indicator for cultural expression.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the relationship between the media and fashion in Perth. The process involves the interpretation of major factors influencing fashion including its contextualization through the examination of global trends. Industrialization has induced a global culture, with a global economy. Culture in the periphery is not equally developed in all sectors of society. The examination of the Perth fashion scene serves to indicate the extent to which a subaltern subject interprets and ratifies the dominant discourse of capitalist nations. The local, intrinsic qualities of
Perth provide an effective indicator for regional status within a world economy.

Therefore, the character of the Perth fashion market cannot be considered in isolation. It needs to be examined within the context of the broader economic, political and social shifts. These changes are related to a number of adjacent and interlocking developments. Media and fashion trends are examined in line with cultural development.

To analyse these factors, the following theories have been applied: Innis's model of core and periphery (1951); Bhabha's notions of mimicry (1984); Gregory Bateson's concept of the double bind (1972); Barthes' definition of fashion as being in/out (1983); and Haug's critique of commodity aesthetics (1986). The body of the paper consists of three chapters.

The central focus of Chapter 1 incorporates the notion of core and periphery which is intimately linked with post-colonial cultural theory. Perth is a region within Australia which is subject to colonial discourse. Australian commercial enterprises have been reliant on core centres of fashion to provide cultural content. This means that the Australian
public have tended to follow overseas cultural traditions, including the presentation of iconoclastic design.

The interface between colonialism and the core/periphery relationship is correlated with the notion of mimicry. The study investigates the extent to which Perth looks towards the core centres of fashion to establish local market trends.

Chapter 1 is therefore particularly concerned with fashion as an expression of the cultural milieu of Perth. It investigates the sources of inspiration which enable the industry to meet the socio-cultural needs of the consumer. A conceptual analysis of fashion is used to identify the major relevant factors.

The second chapter is concerned with the nexus between fashion and the media. Fashion and media are integrally related. The double bind condition suggests that one cannot operate without the other. The application of the double bind establishes the extent to which the relationship is mutual.

Fashion is one of the more important physical avenues of self expression and therefore can be regarded as part of the media
complex. The concept of fashion is most succinctly defined by Roland Barthes. His premise is that the term is subject to a binary condition. That is, at any specific time, fashion is either 'in' or 'out'. For the purpose of this study, commercially produced and marketed fashion is the central focus.

International, national, and local forms of media are examined in the light of the impact they have on local designers and consumers. Particular attention is focused on local publications. Further study of fashion portrayal through television is limited to national and international formats. The networking of television has resulted in the transmission of national and internationally produced programmes to regional markets. The study focuses on the aesthetic representation of television personalities, music video clips and drama.

The chapter analyses a wide range of fashion/media relationships providing tangible evidence of the complex inter-relationships that exist. It also provides the empirical evidence for the study of consumption patterns.
Consumption patterns are investigated in Chapter 3. Haug's critique provides the theoretical framework for the analysis of marketing trends. The focus is on the intricate relationship between the media and fashion as a consumption industry. Case studies are used to illustrate how fashion is presented as a marketable commodity; and the strategies used to meet and create consumer demand.

The quadripartite relationship between the media, designer, retailer, and consumer further emphasizes the double bind. This relationship is examined in the local and global contexts. Notions of status are examined in relation to the inherent contradictions implied through ideals of individual expression and the motivation towards conformity. The study adds perspective to the extremes in fashion concepts: from the expensive luxury garment, to styles that are representative of mass-production. The chapter explores the ambiguous notion that wealth promotes individuality.

The concluding argument provides insight into the ambivalent status of Perth in relation to the world community.
Fashion has a wide range of perspectives from which, within the confines of this investigation, it was necessary to exclude. For the purpose of this paper, it was necessary to confine the concept of fashion to the dominant European and American traditions. These traditions have been interpreted and outlined in Chapter 1. Fashion trends which have been excluded from this analysis include:

i) conventional fashion for men - an integral condition of 'high' fashion is that it continually changes. Conventional styles for men have remained relatively unchanged (for gender based reasons which, within the confines of this thesis, is too involved to elaborate). It is not, therefore, an industry which proposes a compelling factor in the world economy.

ii) subcultural style - the motivation for youth to adopt fashion, and the corresponding market trends have been analysed in Chapter 3. However, the socio-cultural implications of subcultural style are too vast to be incorporated within this thesis.
iii) Mass-marketed and cheap clothing - garments produced in this category relate more to function than fashion style. Again, it is an industry which would be too vast to examine within the confines of this paper.

Radio is excluded from the investigation of media. There is an intimate relationship between fashion, and the visual impact of broadcast and print media. It is the impact of aesthetic expression through which these industries have become a marketable commodity and therefore, a compelling factor within the world economy. Radio is not a visual medium.

Because of the time constraints, the study is largely descriptive. However, where possible, documented evidence is presented and the data is supported by conceptual analysis. Interviews have been undertaken to identify key factors influencing the local industry. There are various levels of fashion retailers in Perth. The sample includes people who represent the alternative fashion traditions.
Perth is a peripheral fashion centre which interprets the marketing trends of international design. The capitalist trend towards industrialization has created the onus for fashion to be marketed globally. Global fashion traditions therefore claim precedence over the character of costume in marginal areas such as Perth. Perth looks to core centres of creation to decipher ideas about what is fashionable. These ideas are then translated and applied to the local market. This condition can only be described as mimicry.

James Carey’s (1981) adaptation of Harold Innis’ theory of core and periphery, and Homi Bhabha’s notion of mimicry (1984), will be used to analyse this condition. The two theories are related because while the core proposes the authoritative discourse, the margins regard and follow the immediate inference. In other words, the core centres of fashion establish the market trends which the margins mimic because of their subalternate position.
Post-colonial cultural theory implies a transition from the traditional notions of domination and exploitation. The colonial subject is generally viewed as being contingent to the capitalist subjection imposed through the bourgeois ideology of the indigenous elite. Colonial discourse accordingly presupposes the adoption and use of mimicry by the colonial subject.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak investigates the notion that "The agency of change is located in the subaltern". (Spivak, 1988, p.197) Bhabha's notion of mimicry will also be used to investigate Perth as a margin within the context of Australia's position as a colonial subject.

The international fashion scene has grown into a huge industry which has recently become a compelling new factor in the world economy. The growth of fashion monopolies has resulted in 'fewer players that really count' (Coleridge, 1988, p.7). There are five core fashion capitals and they are New York, Paris, Milan, London and Tokyo. The philosophies behind Japanese and European design result in idiosyncratic characteristics of particular fashion trends, and the designers originating from these fashion capitals cohere to similar marketing strategies. For the purpose of this analysis the dissemination of fashion trends from Paris, Milan, London and
Tokyo will be referred to as the 'European tradition'. The 'American tradition' correlates to fashion emanating from the United States.

The European tradition of fashion originates from the custom of haute couture. Haute couture is fashion analogous to the individual expression of both the designer and the wearer. The label of a couture garment is the name of an individual designer. The designer's name denotes the value of the garment which connotes the concept of personal status. Couture designs are limited to the wealthy elite. In the late 1950s, French designer, Pierre Cardin, changed the direction of conventional couture fashion by translating the tradition into 'ready-to-wear' clothing. Cardin states "Ready-to-wear is for everyone, not only rich people. We can make both: exclusive clothes can be for the rich" (The Story of Fashion, 1987, SBS).

The ideology of the European tradition requires that fashion produces continual change. This can be confined within a given framework by creating variations on certain themes. Carrie Donovan, editor of The New York Times, elaborates on the difference between the European and American traditions:

A 'designer' designs, a 'stylist' presents a point of view. (The Story of Fashion, 1987, SBS)
The 'stylist' is a concept which has originated from the United States. American design concepts display a point of view which is expressed through the manifestation of 'lifestyle' fashion. The history of American fashion involves a tradition of garment factories and ready-to-wear clothing. The American tradition of fashion does not focus on individual designs but a standardized 'style' suitable for the masses. The success of American management and franchise systems has established an ideology of corporate identity. This has resulted in "high speed / no fuss fashion which has been deliberately designed to suit the modern working woman" (The Story of Fashion, 1987, SBS). The trend incorporates "many roughly similar fashions which enliven one and the same style" (König, 1973, p40).

Neville Brady, an English graphic designer whose work is featured in The Face magazine, adequately expresses the contradictions through his explanation about the general state of global trends in design:

'New' seems to be the key word. Design has a capital 'D' whereas before it was a trade. Style has a capital 'S' and it is becoming very much the modern disease of communication. In fact, all you need is the style. The content is a secondary item and if you happen to have some content then it is a happy bonus.

(Design, 1990, SBS)
Lifestyle fashion is disseminated to Perth from Australian fashion centres. It is an economic imperative that the jurisdiction of corporate fashion industries be contained within the core areas. The dominating trends of the American market are translated through the Australian fashion capitals, Sydney and Melbourne. This proposes a condition of neo-colonialism which establishes cultural identity across the margins. Brady comments:

Design is really about camouflage now, not about honesty and education ... there is continuity about attitude and approach. The continuation of ideas has helped get across to the wider public.

(Design, 1990, SBS)

Mimicry serves to represent the marginal areas metonymically which is established by Bhabha (1984) who quotes Jaques Lacan:

As Lacan reminds us, mimicry is like camouflage, not a harmonization or repression of difference, but a form of resemblance that differs/defends presence by displaying it in part, metonymically.

(p.202)

Local design is limited to small business ventures of individual designers who mimic the fashion trends of the European tradition. The imperative of the local designer is to stimulate consumer desire by maintaining a continual cycle of change.
The marketing strategy for local design is established through the mandates of international tradition.

It could be argued that neo-imperialism based on the media and its ancillaries, such as fashion, results in a form of cultural uniformity throughout the world. Such imperialist notions are a condition of what Carey calls 'high communications policy' (1981, p.83). High communications policy originated in the United States and was aimed at spreading messages and information further in space and time by way of the most competitive and cheapest method that is without obstacle. This results in a global population witnessing the same things at the same time. It is for this reason that fashion design is able to be marketed internationally through a strategy which enforces 'continuity in attitudes and approach'. The success of American management and franchise systems, along with the creation of international corporations has resulted in global business, entertainment and information. Improvement of communications could be identified as a form of power and transmission. Doug Tompkins, founder of the lifestyle ESPRIT label, reinforces Carey's explanation of the effects of high communications policy. Tompkins comments:
the world is getting closer to the similarities in lifestyle. There are certainly parts of Europe and parts of the United States which are somewhat inter-changeable. As an international traveller, . . . I . . . can see a certain class of people that are living very much in the same kind of life-style because there's travel, the media, exchange of ideas which has created this citizen of the world.

(The Story of Fashion, 1987, SBS)

A result could be seen to be a kind of global competitiveness within which the local voice becomes indicative of an ambiguous entity. Industrialisation has promoted sophistication and this can be correlated with the American model. The advent of industrialization in the American fashion market has promoted corporate management systems which have enabled fashion to be reproduced through the mimicry and refinement of successful models. Trends in fashion design which have not grown at an equivalent rate are considered to be less successful and localised, pertaining to their intrinsic cultures and values. Perth should be evaluated as indicative of this less successful model.

The geographical isolation of Perth is reflected through the constitution of local fashion conditions. Australia is seasonally six months behind the European and American models. This creates an advantage for the concept of local design. The
seasonal delay enables designers in Perth to interpret and mimic overseas trends before it becomes relevant to apply the fashion concepts to the local market.

The American trend in adopting the high communications policy resulted in the spread of the communication industry disbanding regional characteristics of the nation, thereby promoting cultural uniformity. Australian States, up until the late 1980s, managed to maintain a sense of separateness within the national and international boundaries. O'Regan (1988/89) establishes that state capital cities and their attendant regional Capital groupings were able to maintain their discrete positions.

They have done so by a deliberate policy of centralisation at a State level accompanied by a corresponding insistence upon their mediating the relations with other metropolitan centres - whether the major Australian centres of Sydney and Melbourne or the overseas regions from whence the Capital (and Labour) came - London/UK, Europe, USA and Japan. (p.136)

Prior to the national networking of companies, Australian business was confined within regional markets. Fashion in Perth was sold through boutiques and major department stores. National and international fashion labels were wholesaled through local fashion agencies. The impetus for
the retail fashion industry in Perth was to trade with stock comprised of a combination of labels. The national and international networking of fashion instituted a change in direction for local marketing trends. Perth retailer, Maria Short (1990), clarifies the changing trend:

... the big names in Australia, like *Sportsgirl*, *Country Road*, JAG, Adele Palmer and *Esprit*, came to WA and opened their own shops. These labels had been my bread and butter, ... You could only be second-best if you sold a garment that was also sold by the very person who made the line.

(p.22)

New technologies of business communication have been responsible for the introduction of national and international networking. O'Regan (1988/89) proposes the argument that "Australia's social and cultural agenda have been reconstructed through the combination of changes within the media, adjacent changes in business, politics and government regulation." This has resulted in what he labels as "an Australian version of a high communications policy" (pp.156-7).

Reasons for this are political and economic in that the enormous growth of corporations results in essential involvement in global marketing. The vastness of such trading facilitates the need to market to a world community,
therefore requiring uniformity and thus acceptance of design. The Perth market accepts the fashion trends of the global community. The local fashion industry aspires to enter the global marketing network. Therefore, regional characteristics of Perth become subject to dominant overseas discourse. Bhabha (1984) establishes the relationship:

\[ \text{... where the observer becomes the observed ...} \]

'Partial' representation rearticulates the whole notion of identity and alienates it from essence.

(p.201)

The media has facilitated the fashion industry through the establishment of advertising networks. The inception of corporate communication systems has enabled cost-effective advertising between the fashion capitals. This means that local public are exposed to international and national ideas about what is fashionable. These ideas are mimicked, and it is precisely here that the notion of mimicry comes into play because people wish to camouflage their marginality. French designer Karl Lagerfeld believes:

There is need for more looks and more alternate fashion in days of television and video than thirty or forty years ago. Then there were only a few papers - few fashion papers - few fashion editors - everything was easy and in a way on the same levels. Now there are all kinds of levels, all kinds of media, ... and there is a confusion that in a way sometimes kills fashion, sometimes even before it is really born, but that's the way things are today and it is ridiculous to fight against the life of the moment because that doesn't exist.

(The Story of Fashion, 1987, SBS)
The current state of fashion hovers between the old world of print and the new world of the visual display unit. The printed page is still the main channel for fashion communication. Magazines are flexible in that they can change easily and follow a new direction under a different editorship. (See Chapters 2 and 3 for further elaboration)

Television has become a major influence on fashion (König, 1973). Television networks broadcast programmes which originate from international and national core areas of production (See Chapter 2 for further analysis). Style is perpetuated through dramatic formats and mass audience talkshows which present personalities who represent a fashion image. Similarities can be drawn between formats in television production and the style of fashion portrayed. The national productions of Channel Nine's *Today*, and Channel Ten's *Good Morning Australia*, mimic the format of the American *NBC Today*. Aesthetic expression displays the principle of core and periphery. All programmes are broadcast to the margin of Perth through television networks. The fashion style perpetuated by media personalities proposes uniformity in standards of dress. Sponsorship supports programmes which are screened to a mass audience, and
accordingly, television personalities are utilized as an advertising medium. For example, the Seven network's programme *Tonight Live with Steve Vizard* receives corporate sponsorship from the manufacturers of the Australian label *Country Road*. Vizard is always dressed in *Country Road* apparel and, through his position as compare, is able to make reference to his 'fashionable' appearance. Steve Vizard's status as a television personality ensures the national endorsement of *Country Road* design.

Perth's indigenous characteristics are influenced by the dissemination of ideas from the marketing of global communication. The 'effective units of culture' and 'social organisation', have been transformed through what Carey (1961) describes as:

... a progressive shift from local and regional units to national and international ones, though not without considerable struggle and conflict. Individuals were linked into larger units of social organisation without the necessity of appealing to them through local and proximate structures. Communication within these local units became less critical for the operation of society and less relevant to the solutions of personal problems. (p.84)

For the reversal of the conventions established through the high communications policy, the suggestion of the director of
American design company *M & Co* would be relevant:

The aim is to find a solution to these kinds of problems... trying to find an audience for idiosyncratic, emotional, quirky, incorrect kinds of solutions as opposed to the kind of solutions that are emblem.

(Design, 1990, SBS)

The global and local conflict is analogous with what Bhabha (1984) describes as 'the inner incompatibility of empire and nation' (P.200). A prerogative of colonial discourse is the perpetuation of mimicry. Confusion reigns within the establishment of cultural and racial priority so that the concept of a national identity becomes problematic. Modes of representation within a nation become symbolic of the conventions of cultural establishment and thus assume power through imitation. As Bhabha states: "Mimicry *repeats* rather than *re-presents*..." (p.200). A condition of fashion is that it presents itself through cycles of change. Designers repeat and reinterpret fashion from past eras and therefore, past conventions are always being re-established. Within colonial discourse, conventional dress standards present notions of costume which promote the concept of tradition. Ted Polhemus states: "In all costume, it celebrates not only the individual but it serves as a uniform" (*Bodystyles*, 1990, SBS)
'It is at the site of struggle and conflict that the intersection of cultural forms creates a sense of identity. It could be suggested that while European and American influences are imposed, genuinely Australian characteristics do exist. The conflict suggests a complex triadic relationship through which Australian identity is interpreted. As a colonial subject, Australia developed its ideas about practical dress from the political and economical domain of British rule. However, technological innovation and corporate business have created a shift in notions of dominance. The trends are reflected through the imperatives of fashion.

The extent to which Perth has established its own cultural identity through the adoption of fashion trends requires interpretation. It could be suggested that in line with the notion of core and periphery and the proposition of cultural dominance, Perth seems to have adopted the character of a combination of aspects from dominant overseas sources. This is recognizable even in context with other States in Australia. Because Perth displays or mimics aspects of everything happening, it creates a sense of confusion which in itself could be identified as its unique character.
While such dependency on dominant cultural forms of dress suggests a position of subordination, it is through the adoption and combination of trends that the resulting sense of 'uniqueness' promotes a sense of individuality. Local designers are required to interpret designer concepts and apply them to Perth's market. For example, the practical application of design is affected by the seasonal differences. With the climatic conditions in Perth not simulating the seasonal characteristics of the core fashion centres, local designs need to be modified to ensure their functional qualities. Therefore, the intrinsic values incorporated through designs emanating from the core fashion capitals may have different applications in Perth. While Perth mimics the international fashion centres, the intention of local design is to cater to the specific social and practical needs of the indigenous market. Bhabha (1984) suggests the process of mimicry creates:

the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an imminent threat to both 'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers.

(p.199)
The ideological climate of contemporary Australia is multi-cultural and accordingly the population consists of different racial and cultural groups. Australia's adoption of multi-cultural-policy has, in the global context, promoted a sense of individuality. However, it has also created confusion about the question of national identity, an ambiguity which is also transposed through the regional character of Perth. The multi-cultural constitution of the local community presents a dichotomy which is expressed through the oracle of fashion. Ethnic costume is often interpreted by local designers and adopted as innovative fashion trends. The motive for multi-cultural expression through local fashion design could be analogous to the concept of elitism and therefore notions of individuality. By acknowledging the ethnic community, the local designer is seen to be identifying with the intrinsic character of Perth's contemporary society. Ironically, ethnic consumers of fashion often aspire to be dressed in the standardized lifestyle fashion, thus ensuring that they cohere to the notions of authenticity established by 'core' values.

Another factor determining the ambiguous nature of cultural plurality is Perth's small population. From a retail point of view this lack of population determines the availability of
contrasting style. Men's wear, for example, is hardly represented by competitive styling.

A symptom of Perth's small population is that many people within the fashion industry desire to leave, to live and work elsewhere. Many young designers believe it is impossible to be successful in Perth. The major problem is seen to be a creative drain on the local fashion trade. The designers who operate within the local market compete by endeavouring to create innovative designs suitable for the national market.

As with many international designers, Perth fashion designer and retailer Ray Costarella was originally a student of architecture. He abides by the rule that 'it is alright to take ideas from someone's work as long as you improve on them'. Accordingly, he believes that he 'picks up on other people's work' and uses ideas, but he reinterprets the idea for his requirements, or for the Australian market (Interview, September 1990). Ray Costarella is ideologically positioned within the notion of individuality. He believes that mimicking is performed by young designers, but usually in the reproduction of London street fashion.
Street fashion is adopted by adolescent youth who incorporate style as an expression of ironical glamour. Irony is notoriously hard to track in the mass market because most people do not understand the mockery. People who aspire to conform to mass marketed fashion interpret the style products as being strictly legitimate. It is for this reason that these products end up feeding the mainstream (See Chapter 3 for further discussion). The styles are originally introduced into the Perth market by local designers who aspire to be fashion innovators, and small retail outlets who import the clothes. Likewise, the local designs and imported garments are incorporated by a minority of Perth's public for whom innovative fashion is a priority. The style products are then mass marketed through national industries which manufacture the designs under the precepts of lifestyle fashion. The infiltration into the mass market is usually delayed until at least one year after the media, and the fashion conscious minority, have introduced the images. The delay is partially created through the local consumer's need to follow established fashions. When the products are repeatedly featured through the media, this promotes security in the notions of 'accepted' fashion style.
The notion of core and periphery is not only applicable within an international context. It is evident that Perth is subject to domination by the national fashion centres, Sydney and Melbourne. O'Regan (1986/89) comments:

> We are still seeing the increasing evolution of a Sydney and Melbourne corridor of information coupled with a reconstruction of relations within the periphery. (p.145)

The Australian market indicates distinct characteristics between the fashion centres and peripheries. Ray Costarella points out that when wholesaling garments within Australia he easily predicts the colour ranges that will be purchased by different states. His seasonal collections feature bright colours for Sydney and Queensland and more sombre shades for Melbourne. Costarella explains this anomaly by distinguishing the character of the fashion centres:

> Sydney and Melbourne are very different. Melbourne people seem to have a lot more style. Melbourne is very cosmopolitan ... You’re more likely to see outrageous people in Sydney. They’re not necessarily stylish about what they’ve chosen to wear. They’ve gone for impact rather than good taste. Comparing the two, Sydney is very American in its outlook whereas Melbourne is a lot more European. Melbourne lifestyle is very different – the cafes – they’re all very European. Sydney is very beach, more like the West coast of America, more like Los Angeles.

(Interview, September 1990)
The Australian fashion capitals tend to mimic the trends which originate from the alternate international traditions. Perth mimics the fashions emanating from the national and international cores. Costarella considers that Perth has its own identity but is striving to be like Sydney and Melbourne. It is an opinion which reinforces Bhabha's (1984) notion:

... the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. (p.199)

There is a prominent trend in the local market for small retail outlets to combine merchandise. This results in many boutiques selling not only the same fashion labels, but the same garments. The majority of retail outlets located in the city cater to the mass market. However, the limited number of boutiques which stock innovative styles of local designers, or alternatively the imported street fashion from London, are located in Perth. Ray Costarella's retail outlet Chapter 2 is located in Perth and carries a combination of Australian labels, including his own. Although Costarella supports local designers, the status of Chapter 2 is reinforced through stocking a selection of labels which originate from the fashion
capitals. Costarella recognises that fashion buyers for local retail outlets show little interest in the merchandise of local designers. He states:

I think it's important. They are doing now what I was doing four to five years ago. It's encouraging for someone to see your work, like it and buy it.

(Interview, September 1990)

A characteristic of Perth consumption is the lack of parochialism. This supports the myth: 'if the label comes from Perth, then it can't be very good'. Local design and production are often considered to be substandard because they are representative of a regional market. Fashion has to originate from Sydney or Melbourne to be creditable. It is therefore more difficult for designers to become established in marginal locations such as Perth. Ironically, if Perth designers were to operate from Sydney or Melbourne, more local buyers would consider retailing their produce. Costarella states:

I'd be quite happy to stock just Perth labels. They sell as well, if not better than anything I buy from the East. Especially labels such as Ali Wood and Hardy Lane. They're producing good work and that is what it's all about. I empathise with them because I know how difficult it is starting out in Perth, I know what they're up against. It's great that Perth designers are staying in Perth.

(Interview, September 1989)
Costarella believes the same difficulties are imposed when wholesaling fashion from a marginal location. The imperative for the wholesale purchase of labels is largely economical; price, saleability and workmanship are the important criteria. While Ray Costarella will support the local wholesale of fashion, he believes no designer should receive preferential treatment as long as the above mentioned criteria are fulfilled. He comments:

It's still difficult for me in the East. Because I'm from Perth, I know that my agents in the East are not giving me as much time as they are their other labels. I'm obviously not selling as much for them. My Melbourne agent, for example, who deals with labels such as Studi Baker Hawke, turns over hundreds of thousands of dollars for them, where as they might be selling only twenty to thirty thousand dollars of my merchandise - so Studi Baker Hawke is getting more of their time. In Sydney, my agent deals with Sarah Sturgeon (a London based label which is manufactured in Hong Kong) and they give me not nearly as much time as they do them. (Interview, September 1989)

The wholesaler's criteria of elitism are considered to be not only earning capacity, but also the origins of production. Therefore, the core fashion capitals maintain the status of a marketing hierarchy to which marginal locations aspire to be integrated.
There is a move within all Australian business which resembles the principles of the high communication policy.

The fashion industry has become monopolized:

The 1980s have seen the rapid consolidation, take-over and merger of corporations in the retail sector with Coles/Myer (in Perth the Boans take-over in the mid-1980s), . . .

(O'Regan, 1988/89, p.144)

While the smaller retail stores in Perth adhere to the principle of merchandising with various labels, the new style of concept stores are prevalent in the local market. Concept stores have evolved from the American tradition of lifestyle fashion which concentrates on a total look; in garments, accessories and decor. Corporate industries are based in the fashion capitals and national marketing strategies are applied to their regional ancillaries. ESPRIT, a label which is marketed globally, is the only American fashion retailed through the Australian market. Doug Tompkins states:

We see ourselves as a lifestyle product company - not exactly fashion company - in which a certain point of view, certain style, certain way of living comes through our products for any age.

(The Story of Fashion, 1987, SBS)
Doug Tompkins believes that the character of his *ESPRIT* stores are based on theories of light and space:

> Sunshine and open space and that translates to a certain way of working and living and relating with other people.
> 
> (*The Story of Fashion*, 1987, SBS)

It is a notion which fits well into the Australian market, and in particular with Perth which is noted for its climate and beaches. Therefore, the Perth market functions as a marginality which endorses the ideology of the American core.

Through the growth of long distance communication new structures were cultivated. It could be argued that the American company *ESPRIT*, which has been operating for fifteen years, is analogous to such a structure. Carey (1981) suggests that new concepts incorporate:

> . . . national classes and professions - new things thought about - speed, space, movement, mobility - and new things to think with - increasingly abstract, analytic, and manipulative symbols.

(p.84)

Doug Tompkins reinforces this notion through explanation of his own product:
It's a sporty, healthy, modern, intelligent way of thinking, way of living, way of going about your work and your private time and mixing those two things. It has a lot to do with a blend of the sort of quality of life you might find in Europe with that of an easy, uncomplex kind of lifestyle you might find in California. (The Story of Fashion, 1987, SBS)

Australian examples of the perpetuation of such business trends are Country Road and Palmer Corporation (trading through the name of JAG). Both are representative of 'lifestyle' fashion. Country Road has become a subsidiary of the Myer/Coles conglomerate and Palmer Corporation is registered as a public company. The marketing strategies of Palmer Corporation will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Fashion as a sign-system does not propose a functional change but a state of consciousness. The global networking of the fashion industry has resulted in cultural uniformity, an expression of which can be seen through design. Marginality has become integrated within a world view. This is in contrast to colonial domination, which adheres to the values of a specific core. The roots of the colonial subject are embedded in the past traditions of the core. The condition of fashion is influenced by the traditions and values of a global market. In other words, an ironic compromise is established which is expressed by Nicholas Coleridge:
As the fashion industry has become international, however, it also gives the impression of being smaller... whichever city you happen to be in, there is the same collection for sale in identically designed boutiques with identical carrier bags. It is fashion colonialism.

(Coleridge, 1988, p.5)
CHAPTER 2

THE FASHION/MEDIA NEXUS IN PERTH

Fashion information is disseminated to Perth through national and international communication networks and locally produced publications. The European and American traditions in fashion are featured through representation of international designs which become the source for mimicry by the national and local industries. Global communication networks produce media formats which are introduced into the local market, and then imitated by national and locally produced texts. Through these texts, the public in Perth are presented with images of fashion which offer the choice between individualization and standardization. The latter is invariably the chosen path (see Chapter 3 for further discussion).

The contrast that exists between the conventions of standardized and individualized fashion trends creates a condition which approximates Gregory Bateson's concept of the double bind; which could also be considered as a variation of Roland Barthes' proposition that fashion has only two values:
in fashion / out of fashion. Annette Laver claims that Barthes has a 'conspiracy theory of fashion' (Laver, 1982, p.162). This is attributed to the notion that the conditions of the production of fashion are analogous to the mechanism by which the capitalist system proposes obvious social manipulation. However, Laver suggests:

... a long term view reveals the consumer society as the supreme meaning-maker ...

(p.162)

In other words, fashion is also perceived as a means by which individual expression can surpass the boundaries of social conformity, thus displaying a compulsion to change by abandoning the original form. König (1973) suggests this in turn:

leads to a compulsion to adaptation, indeed to the closest possible assimilation to the new kind of style.

(p.39)

A paradoxical situation is created; the advent of change demands a process of adaptation or a period of stabilization.

For a fashion to assert itself a certain amount of time is necessary, if only until it becomes conspicuous, its characteristics are realized, and the public have adapted their behaviour to it, which occasionally entails far-reaching changes in attitudes.

(p.56)
The double bind presents a situation in which no matter what a person does, they cannot win. Bateson's theory incorporates the notion that within the components of a relationship between two or more subjects, habitual expectation can result from repeated experience. The nature of the double bind relegates the subject to be a victim of circumstance (Bateson, 1972, p.206) in so far as:

... the double bind theory is concerned with the experiential component in the genesis of tangles in the rules or premises of habit. (p.276)

Within the context of the double bind, a metaphorical statement will be taken literally by an individual. The advent of change often results in contradictory messages transposed through conditions which require response. Fashion could be seen as a metaphorical expression of the changing attitudes and conditions created through the motivations of the capitalist system.

All that can change under capitalism is the 'whim' of the individual through expressive modes such as fashion/clothing. (Craik, 1984, p.70)

Media that rely on impactive images are utilized by the fashion industry as advertising vehicles. Broadcast media
present fashion through various formats. Contemporary drama is a format through which standards in dress are imposed through notions of the simulated lifestyles of the 'real' world. Television personalities adopt fashions which are representative of successful lifestyles. Audiences perceive the trends as being representative of fashion, even if their lifestyles contrast dramatically. The print media dedicate specific texts to fashion. The portrayal of fashion through these formats display ideals in fashion which represent innovative design. Their purpose is to propose future trends, thereby retaining the interest of the fashion conscious, who, by adopting the trends, reinforce the profit motive of the capitalist market. The mass market interpret dress standards displayed by the media as accepted ideals.

Nicholas Coleridge presents research findings showing that in Europe, fashion magazines are very influential, whereas in America, newspapers are considered to be more significant (with the exception of *Vogue*). In the global context, American *Vogue* has emerged as the fashion magazine with the largest circulation and readership. Fashion images portrayed in this publication are relayed throughout various cultures. Accordingly, the American tradition of life-style
fashion achieves greater scope for acceptance. Such influence, it could be suggested, would reinforce the imperialist role of American culture.

Editors fulfill the function of designing communication by discovering information, assessing it, sorting it out, and passing it through the filter of their own personality, thereby ensuring that the message they have chosen is conveyed. Therefore, editors have the power to establish the character of designs through media representations. Designers need to exhibit their creations to the mass market, thereby ensuring their position of status. Editors depend on the status of designers to ensure a marketable text. The relationship is an exponent of the double bind.

Local publications dedicated to the communication of style are *IMAGE* and *WA STYLE*. Both magazines closely resemble international formats. *IMAGE* magazine mimics the English magazine, *THE MANIPULATOR*. The same format has been adopted by utilizing the newspaper style of the large, extended spreadsheet. The character of this paper is established through its format, and the outlets through which it is sold. Apart from metropolitan newsagencies, these
include: selected record stores, cafés and bars frequented by 'trendsetters', and boutiques which perpetuate subcultural style (See Appendix 1). The magazine is directly targeted towards those public who aspire to being 'in' fashion. The concept of fashion is extended to influences other than clothing. The copy is targeted towards youth culture so the magazine accordingly displays interest in subcultural style. However, Jeans West, an extremely commercial enterprise, utilizes the magazine as an advertising medium. Visual impact is ensured through the extremely large format. Ray Costarella comments that IMAGE "forms a great collection but is unmanageable on a bus." The photographic content per item featured extends to full and double page spreads which means that images are comparable to the size of posters. The July/August issue of IMAGE consists of twenty two pages. It could be that the the lack of variety of fashion images obtained from Perth sources is counteracted by the exaggerated format and style of the magazine, therefore suggesting a lack of confidence in the material. With the magazine's premise of catering to 'trendsetters', it expects to provide information on what is most fashionable, and therefore 'in'. The content could be a reflection of the limitations of the Perth market in providing the fashion that
is worthy of being labelled as 'in'. This indicates an ambiguous relationship between the magazine and local concepts of fashion, and therefore the economic viability of the two seems questionable. The first publication of IMAGE magazine appeared in 1989 in a smaller format. At that time it was devoid of competitors and was edited by Andrea Horwood.

Andrea Horwood is now editor-in-chief of WA STYLE. The first issue of WA STYLE was published in May 1990 and it has now reached a circulation of four thousand. The name and the logo mimics the Los Angeles magazine, LA STYLE. The magazine is operating within precepts established by a publication originating from an international core. WA STYLE proclaims itself as "the bible of style". Its theme is 'design' and it is indicative of the current trend in establishing lifestyle concepts. However, it does not feature representations of the standardized corporate lifestyle fashion. The innovative fashion styles featured in the magazine are associated with the European tradition and notions of individuality, thus representing an ideal of what is in fashion for the Perth market. In proposing lifestyle through innovative designs, it is negating the ideals of the mass market which is considered
to be 'out' of fashion. As 'a bible of style' the publication intends to cater to the masses who are being negated through the styles represented. The products featured are usually too expensive for the average consumer. The styles have been selected to establish the visual impact of the magazine. Emphasis is placed on photographic quality so that editorials and advertisements are highly aestheticized.

An examination of issue *WA STYLE #4 September/October, 1990*, provides an insight to the character of the magazine. (See Appendix 2 for an itemised list of contents.)

An example of ambiguous advertising is portrayed through the feature that promotes Ray Costarella's retail outlet, *Chapter 2* (pp.4-5). Page four displays the address of the shop, accompanied by three small fragmented photographic images through which detail is emphasized on both the model and garments. Adjacent is a listing of fourteen designer labels (five of which are local) that are retailed through the shop. A full length photograph portrays the model in a contrived pose. However, the image is constructed in such a way that the garment displayed shows very little definition. The construction of 'personality' by way of the creation of 'mood'
should reflect the commercial character of the business. Costarella follows the traditions of European design. The mood established in this advertisement would more suitably target youth who follow subcultural style. A large metallic cross provides the central focus of the image and is the most prominently displayed item of adornment. The purpose for such misplaced representation may be attributed to the ambiguous nature of the magazine's readership. Costarella clarified that the images were specifically chosen for *WA STYLE*. If the intention was to advertise in the West Australian newspaper, alternatively a more conventional image would be sought. This reinforces the notion that the magazine is providing for a minority market. Local publications, he believes are not particularly relevant, the majority of Perth's community being unaware of their presence. In commenting on the character and attitudes of local public he states that "the people that don't know about them would not be interested anyway". They are only bought by a small percentage of the population: by "only extremely fashion conscious people 'who are in the know'" (Interview, September, 1990). The attitude relegates the mass market as unfashionable, while the minority is considered to be 'in'. 
In this issue of *WA STYLE*, the advertisement "*Perfect Skins Introducing Summer 1990/91*" (p.34) is the only other feature of local design. The advertisement is concerned with the label's promotion which is a strategy incorporated within the European tradition. The procedure elevates the status of the designer, the label and associated retail stockists. A binary relationship which approximates the double bind is formed between the label and stockist. The practice suggests exclusive retailing through a limited number of stockists. National and international designers utilise this method of advertising in fashion publications, thus providing information from the core centres of fashion to the marginal areas. National design is represented in by only one advertisement: "Fiona Andrews Now Open" (pp.38-39)

The core advertising content of *WA STYLE* is comprised of European fashions. Local boutiques seek competitive status through their selections of international labels. *Elle* is a shop situated in Nedlands and owned by Wendy Marshall. A double page spread has been utilized to advertise an Italian label: "*Giorgio Armani*, only at *Elle*", (pp.4-5). The label and the shop are being represented as 'in' through status proposed by exclusivity. *Elle* has developed a long-standing
reputation as a Perth outlet for couture fashion. Prominence was achieved and originally reinforced through its association with the Italian jean shop, Fiorucci. Fiorucci appropriated the means by which more consumers could afford to dress in 'standardized' designer wear and at the same time be exposed to the more expensive and exclusive designs in Elle.

Marshall abandoned this concept to present a new store called Hot Couture, which is still joined to Elle. Hot Couture is a popularized name proposing affordable and fashionable designs for the general public, while Elle remains for the wealthy elite.

The fashion editorial in this issue of WA STYLE is dedicated to Hot Couture (pp.41-48). The absence of rhetoric is in accordance with the magazine's visual style. Photographic imagery is presented over seven pages and is featured through three-quarter-page formats. Written support is limited to the description and prices of the garments portrayed. Readers are required to interpret the connotations of photographic images and the associated prices of the garments as indicators of elite fashionable concepts. This establishes the paradoxical relationship between the targeted readership of the magazine and the public who will adopt the
fashions. The imported designs reinforce the prestige of fashion disseminated from the international core.

"La Moda International Boutique" is located in the suburb of Claremont, known as an affluent residential district which has become the core area for the retailing of 'up-market' fashion. According to their advertisement (*WA STYLE*, p.13), *La Moda* stock twelve European designer labels. It is usual for any established international label to require a minimum order from retail stores of at least twenty thousand American dollars. Minniko Carlini, proprietor of *Jonetsu Japan*, expresses amazement at *La Moda*’s capacity to hold such a large range of international designer-wear for a marginal area such as Perth (Interview, September 1990).

*Jonetsu Japan* (located in Claremont) is featured through an advertisement in *WA STYLE* (p.51). In September, 1990, Minniko Carlini was required to travel to Paris for the viewing and selection of 1991 designer ranges. As a result of the recent buying trip, Carlini has ordered the Japanese label, *Yamamoto*, which is marketed through the strategies adopted by the European tradition. The geographical positioning and 'isolation' of Perth imposes associated expenses which are
transposed to the retail garment. Australian regulations for imported fashion impose the payment of fifty-five percent duty which is added to the wholesale price of the garments. Carlini's decision to purchase *Yamamoto* designs was based on the fact that the label has now gained international status. The president of the company indicated that media promotion of the *Yamamoto* label is monitored through a comprehensive international advertising campaign. The company finances the promotion and ensures that advertisements are featured in national and international texts. International fashion industries which operate within marketing strategies of the European tradition, supervise and therefore establish relationships with retailers in marginal locations. Carlini believes that Australian *VOGUE* will introduce the label for next Spring/Summer. This is because *VOGUE* magazine is internationally marketed through independent publications which cater to the character of individual fashion centres. The impact of *VOGUE* on international and regional markets is discussed in Chapter 3. Carlini will be liable for the cost involved in having *Jonetsu Japan* listed as an Australian stockist. The double bind is established through the inter-dependency of core fashion
centres, marginal stockists and the consequent ideals for media promotion.

It is Minniko Carlini's opinion that advertisements for *Jonetsu Japan* are not successful in local publications:

> We support the creation of local magazines so we had to be part of the initiation — but we have a business and we must get reaction for paying between five hundred to one thousand dollars for advertising. Perth needs a magazine which provides fashion information so I really respected what *WA STYLE* are are doing, but for our business it is better to advertise nationally. The problem is that we are too far from the Eastern States. They know that we have really good clothes and they want to obtain photographs, but it is impossible.  
> (Interview, September 1990)

There are limitations imposed on overseas fashion trends which are marketed through the marginal retailers. Exposure through media coverage which is monitored by the fashion centres counteracts the indigenous character of the peripheries.

*View Factory* is located in Perth and supports subcultural style which caters to both genders. While much of the fashion is imported from London, its iconoclastic nature contrasts with alternate European designs. The advertisement in *WA STYLE* (p.14-17) would be relevant to only a minority
group specific to youth culture (See Chapter 3 for explanation of the youth market). It is supposed that most youth of today would be unable to afford the European fashion featured throughout the magazine. In the context of the values expressed through reactionary fashion styles emanating from London, it is ironic that importation fees are translated to the prices of garments. In the local market, the prices of the garments available from View Factory indicate notions of elitist concepts in fashion. The anomaly within WA STYLE results from conflicting impressions of its targeted readership. On the one hand, style is represented as synonymous with status, while on the other, deviation is proposed. This could be interpreted as a crossing of the boundaries dictated by the editors of mainstream magazines like VOGUE (See Chapter 3 for elaboration). However, such ambiguity may prove to be the productive factor for a peripheral area such as Perth.

The emphasis placed on the WA STYLE's form in contrast with content may result in misrepresentations of true 'Western Australian style'. Misrepresentation can be seen in context with the feature 'gift of the gab' (p. 64-67). Photographic images are presented of a West Indian model
posing in two examples of London designer *Vivienne Westwood*'s attire. The text reads: "*Vivienne Westwood*, Autumn/Winter, 1991: photography - Gaby Hughes". Only in the list of contents (see appendix 2) is there mention made of the photographer's relationship to Perth. The feature connotes 'a world first' disclosure showing examples of *Vivienne Westwood*'s Autumn/Winter, 1991 fashion collection. In other words, it is a feature of *Vivienne Westwood* clothing; photography by Gaby Hughes. It does not appear to be a feature of the photography of Gaby Hughes; clothing by *Vivienne Westwood*. The magazine is relying on the prestige of the core to establish status as a local publication. The *Vivienne Westwood* label is not merchandised through any of Perth's retail outlets. The visual substance of *Vivienne Westwood* design communicates an ambiguous relationship between the publication and its readership.

*WA STYLE* seems to be promoting the notion of mimicry through style, format and readership. Notable is the absence of lifestyle fashion synonymous with the convention of the American tradition. The format suggests that the editor is addressing a discerning readership. With the population in
Perth being so small and the number of fashion conscious people representing a minority, the magazine's economic viability is questionable. History has seen many local publications fold because they lack an effective marketing strategy.

The significance of newspapers in any market is the accessibility to a large readership. With the recent demise of *THE DAILY NEWS*, the Perth market is currently supported by only one local daily newspaper: *THE WEST AUSTRALIAN*. Newspapers provide integrated sections which concentrate on different content. *YOU* is a specialized supplement provided in the Tuesday edition of the newspaper. Fashion content is confined within the editorial space of the double page. Editor, Ruth Thorpe, compiles a selection of garments around which she composes a localised theme, therefore supporting marginality. Imagery is supported by descriptive rhetoric. Established local designers and retail outlets are receptive to this medium as a source for obtaining extensive coverage. Likewise, they receive interest from Ruth Thorpe. Both Carlini and Costarella prefer coverage through these pages than representation in other local magazines. Carlini states:
We advertise in *WA STYLE* sometimes, but unfortunately people who read it can't afford our prices. *Express* are always approaching us to advertise but we can't see any relevance. *THE WEST AUSTRALIAN* is good because everybody reads it.

(Interview, September 1990)

Only a few retail outlets will pay to obtain exposure through *THE WEST AUSTRALIAN*. This is largely due to the visual limitations inherent in the medium. Suburban fashion outlets are the main advertisers. This is partially because most do not receive coverage through editorials in the paper and alternate options for advertising in the local market are limited. These shops justify the financial outlay by taking into account the potential readership that the only local daily newspaper reaches.

Occasional colour features are presented in *THE WEST AUSTRALIAN MAGAZINE* found in Saturday's edition of the newspaper. Such features provide more scope for expression due to the use of colour and the better quality paper on which it is printed. The issue of November 3, 1990, features an article entitled "The New Sports Chic" (p.34), written by Ruth Thorpe. The theme is 'function and fashion'. The suggestion is that casual life-style fashion is now being translated through designer-wear which incorporates the
American influence into European traditions. The trends of the international fashion centres are then disseminated through local media to the margin of Perth. The thematic emphasis was the choice of the editor whose intentions are to appropriate a positive reception through a readership which are known to identify with both styles.

*EXPRESS* is a local paper which portrays weekly local attitudes on fashion. Its primarily focus is on the music and entertainment industry. The fashion it portrays is most often style that is really bound to music video clips. Again, the influence of international industry is prevalent. *EXPRESS*’s impact can largely be contributed to the fact that the paper is free; its revenue coming from advertising. Many fashion outlets in Perth utilise this source to advertise their concepts and garments. The paper’s primary emphasis is directed towards the youth market. Therefore, the smaller, individual retail outlets such as *Chapter 2*, *Angel Hearts* and *View Factory* monopolise the medium for editorial purposes because it is innovative design which provides visual impact in the publication. Perth has only a small number of retail outlets relevant for such coverage, so the fashion editorials
tend to be rotated between local designers and stores. Some
attention is focussed on the leisure-wear concept stores, but
mainly in the form of advertising. Such stores do not
conform to fashion associated with music until the styles
become legitimated by the minority groups (See Chapter 3 for
marketing strategies).

Fashion director of the American magazine *ELLE*, Mary
Russell, makes an analogy of her magazine with the impact of
music video clips:

We are so visual now, that people don't even know how
visual we are: having *MTV* on all day, reading two
magazines at once, it's subliminal but it's there. *ELLE*
just hits them, pow! ... (Coleridge, 1988, p.252)

The aesthetic traditions displayed in music video clips are
representative of the transitional state of photographic
images. Pop stars become the models. They are famous not
only for their music but also as icons of fashion. Television
supports the promotion of music and fashion style in two
ways: firstly through the presentation of specialized music
shows; and secondly through changing conventions witnessed
in drama.
Perth viewers have access to television programmes which specialize in presenting music video clips. Examples are: **VIDEO HITS, MTV, THE NOISE, RAGE, and COUNTDOWN REVOLUTION**. They position the spectator in the public market place. Marsha Kinder (1987) indicates:

> The TV spectator has a dual role: first, as an individual viewer/listener absorbing images and sounds into one's own consciousness and memory, ...; and secondly, as a member of a mass audience or community (McLuhan's 'global village') who share common associations, desires, and ideological assumptions.

(p.245)

The audience is motivated to purchase products that they have been inspired by television to desire, thereby submitting to the bourgeois consumerism proposed by the capitalist industries of the core.

Music video clips most often utilise the same conventions as the television commercial. The duration of a song does not usually extend beyond a few minutes. This means that images are short, sharp and impactful, thereby enhancing their ability to lure the spectator into continued viewing, and this translates into increased selling power. Kinder also states:

> The holes in the plot are usually filled by the lush visuals - the exotic settings, costumes, hairstyles, and make-up as well as the fast cutting effects.

(p.240)
Miami Vice, an American drama broadcast in Perth, is indicative of a relayed reaction to the music video tradition. The programme has adopted a style which extends the conventions of the music video. The songs and their associated hi-tech musical arrangements reduce the need for excessive dialogue. MIAMI VICE promotes a sense of heightened reality which is partially induced through the technical conventions of fast cutting effects and innovative camera angles.

MIAMI VICE's style concept could be largely attributed to producer Michael Mann who was specifically interested in presenting an image that would be indigenous to Miami (The Story of Fashion, 1987, SBS). The colours are supposed to simulate the blue of the ocean and the pink and cream tones of Miami's sand. The series also incorporates colours typical of Miami's pink and lavender (with mint trim) buildings. These colours are described as vibrating pastels and are supposed to translate the feeling of great energy. MIAMI VICE therefore represents a 'colour story' in addition to a 'cop story'.
Definite styles have been developed for the stars, Crockett and Tubbs. Crockett's character has a specific look which could be translated into a normal wardrobe for men. He is always featured in co-ordinating colours of white, pink, lavender, mint or peach. This colour co-ordinating also works in with the costumes of Tubbs, other principal characters, and the environment established in each episode. Characters that display the more volatile and contrary styles are the resident drug dealers. Women tend to be represented stereotypically, as elegantly dressed hookers or wealthy widows. Lagerfeld comments:

Suddenly it looks right on this man from *Miami Vice* to wear a pink shirt or T-Shirt with a green jacket and not too well shaved because it looks OK on him and it is the right moment to do it. It is why other boys can copy it.

*The Story of Fashion*, 1987, SBS

The leisure-wear style is available through lifestyle stores in Perth. The local market's incorporation of the *Miami Vice* style is perceived by the masses to be indicative of conformity to fashion. For the people who adopt the style, it is the mass acceptance by the public which defines the condition of being 'in' fashion. This represents the double bind because the mass public will not accept lifestyle standards in fashion unless they
are representative of the lifestyles of the masses. It is a paradoxical situation. In accepting such trends, the local public mimic the ideals behind the lifestyle of the American core. Andrew Ross (1987) suggests:

"If the fashion grabs you, so will the politics" - which should worry us most. For beyond the innovative appeal to a consumerism with a built-in social conscience, beyond the heady invitation to participate in a new kind of oppositional middle-class lifestyle, there is an assumption here about the determinate or mixed nature of cultural meanings that is both unearned and unwarrented - the assumption that a certain style will necessarily align itself with a certain politics.

(p.316)

Within the dictates of Carey's notion of high communication policy, fashion can be seen as a symbolic acceptance of the political and economic dictates of the core centres of media production. Newcombe and Hirsch (1983) quote Carey who describes communication as:

a process of transmitting messages at a distance for the purpose of control. The archetypal case of communication then is persuasion, attitude change, behavior modification, socialization through the transmission of information, influence, or conditioning.

(p.457)

Television serves to examine the attitudes and values within social structures. The cultural inference for a marginal area such as Perth is the adoption of dominant values and
expression emanating from the core areas of media production.

There are contrasting media trends in Perth. Television networks feature programmes which originate from the national and international core. Perth receives international, national and local publications. The local publications play the major role in the development of Perth's fashion scene. Very little broadcast media is locally produced. The intervention of factory design and couture proposes an Australian tradition of 'ready-to-wear'. This is perhaps indicative of an ironic compromise established in Australian culture between the relationship of mimicry and change. Through media representations of international fashion ranges, Australian designers are able to create and mimic designer styles.
CHAPTER 3

CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

The practical motivation for people to dress is to acquire body cover. Western culture dictates that humans be covered in some shape or form: partially to conceal the socially prohibited sexual parts of the body; also for protection. A function of dress is to promote conformity and the notion of modesty and respectability. People need only a few clothes to survive. However, simple needs have given rise to massive business enterprises. The clothing and fashion industry has historically evolved through complex inter-relations between political, economical and social forces.

Aesthetic innovation in fashion imagery is a function of industry for regenerating demand. Temptation works as an agent of demand by inducing the consumer to buy. The manifestation of capital can only be realized through incessant aesthetic innovation. The mystery and power of fashion lies in this cycle of constant renewal and change. An individual's sensual organization is continually transformed.
Wolfgang Haug (1986) stresses the ambiguous nature of the term 'commodity aesthetics' but defines his application as being confined:

... on the one hand to 'beauty', i.e. an appearance which appeals to the senses; and, on the other hand, to a beauty developed in the service of the realization of exchange-value, whereby commodities are designed to stimulate in the onlooker the desire to possess and the impulse to buy.

(p.8)

A definitive condition of 'commodity aesthetics' is that it is economically based. Within the capitalist system, the exchange-value of fashion is functionally determined and expressed through stylistic form. Haug proposes the concept of 'aesthetic abstraction' which he explains is a process that is crucial to consider 'within the mediating context of economic and technological developments, ...' (p.49). This process incorporates the use of material qualities that become interpreted through notions that promote sensual pleasure, therefore resulting in economic reward.

While the aesthetic momentum of fashion is driven by the profit motive, it is also an important function of industry to perpetuate the notion of social conformity. Designer Karl
Largerfeld recognizes the mandate: "every art is limited by its medium, mine by clothing... I cannot pretend to sculpture and make a woman the ridiculous pedestal of my pretentions" (The Story of Fashion, 1987, SBS). The condition is congruent with the double bind.

Haug's critique of 'commodity aesthetics' provides a relevant framework through which international, national and local consumer patterns in fashion can be assessed. He provides an analysis which focuses on the constitution of appearance, sexuality and advertising in capitalist society. These concepts are determined and affected by the independent and intervening roles performed by the media, designer, retailer and consumer. Each function promotes categorical imperatives which are instrumental in the formation of complex relations of dependency.

This analysis is relevant to the global fashion scene including the periphery of Perth. However, Perth is also influenced by other factors as a result of its marginal position. Europe has had many centuries to develop its fashion needs and reflects differences in ethnic background, climate, economic development, lifestyles and cultures. America on the other
hand, has had a much shorter history but still has had time to develop a tradition in fashion, especially through reaction to the mass production and marketing philosophies within a free enterprise economy.

Western Australia has had a relatively short history. The one hundred and sixty years of European settlement means that it is at a much earlier stage of development. The production and marketing strategies are not as well defined, the special needs of the local community are not always identified, and the infra-structure for production and marketing is still in its infancy. However, even at this stage it is possible to identify local adaptations in areas such as colour ranges, fashion for outdoor living and styles for a more informal way of life.

To understand the fashion scene in Perth it must also be reviewed in the light of the international scene. It provides the perspective to understand its current status and its prospective future. Whatever the future of fashion in Perth, it will involve an integration of local influences and the international scene.
Nicholas Coleridge (1988) acknowledges the relationship between designers, store buyers and magazines as being representative of a 'fashion triangle'. He questioned American *VOGUE* editor-in-chief, Grace Mirabella, about the positioning of power within this tripartite formation of fashion: "Is it designers who dictate how women dress, or the store buyers or magazines?" While qualifying her response as unbiased, Mirabella replied "Magazines". She further elaborated:

> Which is not to say that individual designers don't make important statements, or that store buyers aren't the first on their block. But finally the magazines dictate what's at the top. We don't design clothes, but we can be very selective in our reporting.

(p.250)

The pioneers of fashion conceive the primacy of their separate functions in context with their iatological positioning.

The influence of the media is paramount because fashion needs to be exhibited. "Fashion does not and cannot exist in seclusion; it wants the world for its stage. It needs to see and to be seen ..." (König, 1973, p.57). The relationship between fashion exhibition and spectatorship is complimentary. Store buyers and consumers rely on display to ascertain what is 'in' fashion. The more extensively fashion is exhibited, the
greater the degree of spectatorship. The relationship could be proposed as a binary process where by spectatorship promotes exhibitionism. This is the double bind: one cannot function without the other.

Fashion reflects itself through the public arena, both locally and globally. Extensive fashion coverage is achieved through direct use of all mass media (daily papers, illustrated weeklies, fashion magazines, journals, film and television). Specialized and professional shows and parades are important to those whose ambition it is to be pioneers of fashion. However, such displays are rarely accessible and have no direct appeal to the public at large. Indirectly, their influence is extended through fashion editors, and thence the media. They are the mediators.

The fashion editor aims to promote concepts in style that represent cultural tradition. American and European magazines feature photographic images which propose a philosophical divide. Photography has become an enormous influence on fashion because it provides a crucial link between the creator and wearer. A photographer's role is to translate the mood of clothes and accessories as well as their cut.
According to Bruce Weber, who is considered to be 'photographer of the eighties', the attitude of the fashion editor is the critical quality (The Story of Fashion, 1987, SBS).

The analysis of the print media's contribution to the local fashion scene has been discussed in Chapter 2, however it is relevant to discuss the media's role in the national and international scene to further the understanding of the marginal status of Perth and its position within the context of the global industry.

VOGUE is published in various forms that cater to international margins. Coleridge (1988) perceives the differentiation:

'American' means the model jumping in the air on a side catwalk, grinning energetically from behind a shillelagh of blond hair. 'European' means more restrained, serious and artistic. The American way has always been epitomised by American Vogue, the European by English, French and Italian Vogues.

(pp.250-251)

Anna Wintour describes metaphorically the cultural difference between the respective VOGUES in establishing that the formats relate to the "charm of the English woman, chic of the French woman, the allure of the Italian or the ease of
the American" (*Design*, 1990, SBS). Wintour received her training while working with American *VOGUE* and, in her present position as editor-in-chief, translates her experience through the once 'European' style English *VOGUE*. Wintour has become a powerful influence on fashion worldwide. She believes that a lot of editorial decision is reliant on personal interpretations. Through travel Wintour is able to analyse fashion trends worn by different cultures. By observing trends in style worn both at night and on the street, she is able to then assimilate the same form into the magazine.

Editors of mainstream magazines like *VOGUE* do not present extremes in style. The economic imperative dictates that it is necessary to attract a mass clientele rather than to focus on a minority perspective. Wintour maintains that the readership of English *VOGUE* is largely comprised of younger women who cannot afford expensive couture designs (*The Story of Fashion*, 1987, SBS). In contrast, the European Italian and French *VOGUE's* tend to target their market to the wealthy elite who can afford to buy expensive designer clothes. American standards in fashion and media are being adopted by English *VOGUE*, thereby establishing a displacement of European traditions. This presents a
contradiction of ideals expressed through the contrast between American and European traditions. Nicholas Coleridge (1988) points out: "Now all the VOGUE's in the world sell the same sharp, seductive sensationalism" which reinforces the contradiction:

Discriminating European women, they argue, do not want their magazine to be processed. They do not want to look like Texans and jump in the air. They do not have big white teeth like piano keys. They would not show all their cleavage. They belong to a separate cultural tradition, and relate to more sophisticated allusions. It is the European tradition that finds parallels between a coat by Gianni Versace and high Renaissance portraiture, and decides to photograph the new French collections in Arles because there was a spirit of the Camargue about clothes. Sharp, seductive, sensational VOGUE would photograph the new French collections at the marina in Fort Lauderdale. VOGUE's logic is quantitative: they sell more copies. The Europeans say: yes, but to whom? Not to discriminating women rich enough to buy expensive designer clothes.

(p.251)

With the profit motive being the primary consideration for both American and European cultural traditions, the notion of a quantitative market is ambiguous.

European VOGUE's are retailed by only a few news agencies in Perth. Alternatively, they can be found at Angus and Robertson book stores. They have a retail value of approximately twenty dollars so purchase would be limited to
the extremely fashion conscious. The emphasis on price and limited availability promotes and reinforces the concept of elitism perpetuated by the style of the magazine. Minniko Carlini and Ray Costarella purchase Italian VOGUE. They perceive the three month delay for arrival in Australia as a disadvantage. However, because of the delay in receiving the magazine there is time and space which facilitates mimicry and interpretation of new fashions for the local market.

Australian VOGUE is published in Sydney. Its relatively large readership has ensured that it has been financially successful and an effective market indicator. The retail price of the magazine is five dollars. Editorial and advertising content often feature: European designer labels with corresponding lists of Australian stockists; Melbourne and Sydney designer-wear; and the wider established corporate labels. While the focus is on central areas of fashion, marginal locations obtain coverage through being listed as stockists. The format of the magazine resembles American VOGUE, however features often present the more sophisticated allusions contingent with European traditions. Australian VOGUE therefore mimics both American and European fashion design and magazine style.
However, there must be a connection between the print media and fashion. In Europe and America the fashion show plays an important part in providing this link. Fashion shows are important for the media/fashion nexus because they are a primary means by which fashion is publicized and sold. It is through parades that designers exhibit their latest collection. Designers who participate in such shows are contenders in the European tradition of couture. They design made-to-order clothes and are instigators of trends. Most designers follow the fashion dictums of the international leaders.

Spectatorship is confined to those who are influential in communicating aesthetic innovations. The audience is usually comprised of a few private customers, fashion editors and buyers.

The seating arrangements at important European fashion shows are indicative of the competitiveness between editors. They are ranked hierarchically, in order of precedence.

The hierarchy of seating is carefully stratified: *Women's Wear Daily* is the centre-middle then *New York Times*, then American *Vogue* and *Harpers Bazaar*, then European *Vogues* and *Harpers & Queen*, and then *Elle*, *Marie-Claire*, and quality newspapers and tabloids. Ranged on the periphery are the Japanese and German editors, at the back the Australians and the trade papers.

(Coleridge, 1988, p.248)
In Perth fashion shows are not as relevant because there are limited opportunities for display through parades and there are few social functions which support the standards of 'time/place/occasion' dressing. This is partially a reflection of the size of the local population. Parades in Perth are occasionally presented as promotional functions and entertainment features, specifically for nightclubs such as *Network* and *Exit*. There are few designers in Perth who produce original collections within the precept required for personalized events. Media promotion and coverage is ensured through the local publications. Such promotions benefit the venue; the designer; the retail outlets; and particularly the publications which are always attracted to the visual potential of special events. The spectators are people who have specific interests in fashion knowledge. Generally, the audience is the same population who frequent particular nightclubs and have an interest in local publications and innovative designs. It is a common phenomena for the social pages of local magazines to repetitively feature the same public faces. All this means that the promotion reinforces the knowledge of an already converted public, with new information only being generated to the potential youth market.
Charity benefits have become globally accepted as a means through which fashion can be displayed. When the opportunity arises to hold such gala events, the economic imperative dictates that they be patronized by the wealthy minority. Nicholas Coleridge (1988) argues that:

Charity underpins the Shiny Set. It provides both a purpose and a justification for buying couture dresses. It also raises an incredible amount of money . . . (p. 56).

Local personality Rose Hancock, wife of Lang Hancock, one of Australia's richest men, this year opened a store in Claremont called Prix d'Amour; (prize of love). The connotations of the name and the retail price of the merchandise suggests that love is equated to the 'prize of wealth'. The French Azzaro label, exclusive to Prix d'Amour, was launched through a gala charity event. The function was hosted by Rose Hancock, the venue was their Mosman Park mansion, The Salvation Army was the beneficiary, and tickets were five hundred dollars each. The patrons of the event were prominent local personalities. In establishing the 'deep need excessive preoccupation with fashion fulfils for the Shiny Set' Coleridge concludes:
The fashion industry creates its own public figures and ambassadors, and its own network of foreign offices and foreign assignments through the international boutiques, salons and collections. By buying seriously from a major designer you are not simply buying clothes but a stake in a whole society in which to wear them.

(p.69)

Rose Hancock aspires to this position through her conduct within the fashion world. Largerfeld believes "Society is now not what it used to be. Now it's about the rich and the famous. Then it was about the titled ones" (The Story of Fashion, 1987, SBS). *Prix d'Amour* is the retail outlet for the special client: the very rich.

*Prix d'Amour* mimics the fashion style portrayed in the American soap opera *Dynasty* which is broadcast to Perth audiences and therefore represents a further example of American influence which has infiltrated the Perth market. Australian television becomes a forum of expression for American monopoly capitalism and its pluralistic nature. Local television networks feature a large proportion of American content. Therefore, Perth viewers are required to interpret American standards. The reading of *Dynasty* involves a process of negotiation between the story on the
screen and the culture of Australian viewers. This negotiation takes place through the interaction of the viewers themselves and the programme which represents a lifestyle that, within the ideals of capitalist society, most people are assumed to desire. It can be interpreted as a drama that fuels a fantasy. The characters consist of handsome, rich, powerful men and beautiful women who reside in elegant homes. The eye catching trappings of wealth lure the audience to view the weekly episodes.

Behind *Dynasty*'s fashion styling is the designer Nolan Miller. His designs incorporate the most elaborate fabrics, usually adorned with elaborate trimmings. Nolan Miller attributes the lure of *Dynasty* to the fact that while "we don't exactly have a depression now . . . we certainly have enough trauma in the world with all the wars and the terrorists etc." Therefore: "I think that people look for fantasy and escape as people did with the movies in the thirties" (*The Story of Fashion*, 1987, SBS). In that era, Hollywood portrayed glamour to the extreme and therefore provided people with escape from the realities of economic hardship.
The manageress of *Prix d'Amour*, Debbie Harber, describes the imported merchandise as being 'over the top' in design. In other words, the garments simulate the designs of *Dynasty*, in that they feature elaborate fabrics and trimmings. The character Alexis is played by Joan Collins who is renowned for her costumes. The style has become synonymous with the actress. Karl Lagerfeld suggests:

Nobody wants to look like Joan Collins. This is being rich in an obvious way. That is not fashion anymore because it appeals to a too limited group of people and it is not an influence like Sade or Madonna because in fact it is not very creative; it's just rich. *(The Story of Fashion, 1987, SBS)*

With Perth's limited population, it is questionable as to how many people could afford to adopt such style or why people would wish to be so obvious. It would be reasonable to suspect that people who adopt such overt forms of aesthetic display interpret the condition of being 'in' fashion as analogous to being extremely wealthy. Such ornamentation surpasses the notion that status is synonymous with designer labels. A notion of conformity in dress is promoted for a minority population, therefore the styles are not innovative nor subject to a cycle of constant renewal and change.
Just because it is completely inessential from the standpoint of exchange-value, the sensuous being of those with money is preyed upon, sustained and attended to in all its fancies, moods and whims, as the industrial capitalist caters for 'his neighbours' most depraved fancies, panders to his needs, excites unhealthy appetites in him and pounces on every weakness' [Karl Marx, *Capital*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976, vol. I, pp. 493-4, note 4].

(Haug, 1986, pp. 17-18)

*Prix d'Amour* has not been open long enough to establish the nature of a regular clientele. Harber suggests that at this time, customers are interested in the smaller novelty items which include jewellery, perfume and 'items suitable for gifts'. The present curiosity of the local customer is a response to coverage received in the local media. Customers aspire to become familiarised with the merchandise and therefore the inherent implications that imported labels contribute to the notion of status. *Prix d'Amour* can be contrasted with *Jonetsu Japan* discussed in Chapter 2. *Jonetsu Japan* caters for a discerning clientele with quality garments at more reasonable prices.

There is a move internationally towards interpreting fashion from the street. This is a phenomenon echoed through codes of dress prevailing at local sources of entertainment such as nightclubs and discos. Youth in Perth tend to mimic London 'street' fashion.
London street fashion represents a visual protest of: unemployment; ultimate dissent from the norms of society; against convention; against any previous ideals of beauty. It is fashion as heraldry. The ultimate in symbolic dressing.

(The Story of Fashion, 1987, SBS)

This analysis was reinforced through the narration of

Bodystyles: Dressing Up:

The varying dress of new tribal groups like punks and hippies says - like costume - 'this is where I'm at'. But as they look the same whatever country one finds them in, it must be a matter of values rather than geography.

(Bodystyles, 1990, SBS)

Youth who adopt this mode of dress consider their lifestyle to be set apart from the establishment. The propagation of such new appearances is intended to provide an identity as a group. Fashion is adopted as a visual display of their desire to achieve independence. However, the motivation to develop new forms and styles is continuous. Change is compelled through critical attitudes of life-style and appearance. Fashion enterprises draw inspiration from the innovative qualities inherent in the imagery, therefore, the styles are constantly expropriated. While the fashions may change, the groups that conform to those fashions stay the same.
since young people are easiest to manipulate, they become the instrument and expression of a general trend towards moulding. Their fetishization is both expression and instrument in one.

(Haug, 1986, p.72)

Specialist stores in Perth such as View Factory and Orphans, import fashions originating from the expression of rebellious youth in London. There is the usual six months delay in the acquisition of merchandise, and the duty imposed on imported clothes means that the fashion appropriates a status that is not representative of the trend in London. Therefore, local portrayals of these fashions are only following the trends which originate from London as the central area of creation.

Perth designers adapt the non-conformist fashion construed by London youth as well as the traditions of European design. Local publications portray the fashion of Perth designers through formats that are similar to those used in American and English magazines. However, in both contexts, because the "form results from the calculations of aesthetic innovation, one of its inherent qualitative features will be the 'out-dating' of the 'old' " (Haug, 1986, p.98). This is partially because the initial concept of the fashion is reinterpreted, so the original motivation which instigated the creation is likely to be misrepresented. The original always maintains the
status of being perceived as the innovation, therefore mimicry
of fashion styles are considered to be less appropriate. Bhabha
(1984) quotes Lacan in describing this condition:

Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct
from what might be called an itself that is behind.
(Jacques Lacan, 'The Line and Light', Of the Gaze.)
(p.198)

The capitalist market utilizes the aesthetic expression of the
young to establish new markets. Manufacturers observe the
aesthetic innovations of youth who are therefore performing
the function of a tested prototype. They become the models
for mimicry and appropriate the condition of the double bind.
As Haug points out: "... a particular ideal customer becomes
a general customer-ideal" (Haug, 1986, p.92). Youthfulness is
essential for the evolution of new standardized fashion images.
They, as designers and consumers, tend to be the innovators.
As marketers they provide a service at a reasonable price
without the impediment of brand name premiums and
import loadings.

The fashion market may be regarded as a normal distribution
with Prix d'Amour clients at one end of the spectrum and
youth at the other. The middle ground, and by far the
largest part of the market, is serviced by standardized design. This is as true for Perth as anywhere else in the fashion world.

The nature of standardized design evolved from the American tradition of ready-to-wear and is currently translated through the marketing strategies of life-style fashion. International fashion monopolies have created a competitive global market. Aesthetic innovation can no longer be considered as the ideal for determining fashion trends. Fashion has become industrialized. The growth of corporate fashion industries has created the need for global marketing. Designers of standardized fashion are required to create trends which cater to the demands of a world community. Political, economical and technological imperatives impose restrictions on the ideal of individual aesthetic expression.

When you design something that appeals to everyone, you lose the idiosyncrasies... You take something that has had a roughness to it and chip away at that until you get a perfect sphere.

*Design, 1990, SBS*

Standardized design is a priority for mass consumption. The individual interprets the mass production of design concepts to be indicative of consumer trends. This influences them to
follow the trend and therefore be 'in' fashion. The economic reward for the fashion industry promotes diversification. The concept of fashion is no longer limited to clothing. This is reflected through licencing agreements whereby manufacturers of items that produce clothing accessories adopt the identity or brand name of fashion monopolies. The marketing strategies of international monopolies are interpreted through national and local industry.

Perth consumers wear mainly lifestyle fashions in the American tradition. JAG, a brand name within Palmer Corporation Limited, is analysed as a functional entity within the local fashion scene. It demonstrates how Perth is an integral part of the world fashion scene.

*Palmer Corporation Limited* is an Australian company which produces the trans-regional fashion labels: JAG, JAGMEN, Adele Palmer and Harry Thurston Australia.

While brand-named goods which are distributed locally seem laughable, like other local customs, names and dialects, the trans-regional brand-names of large companies impose themselves on to the public's experience and virtually assume the status of natural phenomena.

(Haug, 1986, p.25)
The retail establishments owned by the corporation trade under the name of *JAG* and are located in most Australian States. These stores stock all labels produced by the company. *Palmer Corporation* operates a licensing division which takes the *JAG* brand into fragrances, sunglasses, watches and shoes. Major Australian department stores and boutiques also merchandise the stock. All *JAG* and *Adele Palmer* designs are manufactured under licence in New Zealand. In 1989 negotiations were finalised with New York based *He-Ro Industries* whereby all women's designs were to be manufactured for the United States market under the *Palmer & Palmer* label. *Palmer Corporation Limited* have operated in the United States market for the last fifteen years, having sold their products to department stores and major boutiques in America (Press Release, 24 October 1989).

*Palmer Corporation* mimics the tradition of life-style fashion and ironically supplies the American market. With the exception of *ESPRIT*, American fashion products are not imported to Australia. Therefore, Australia only adopts American concepts, attitudes and ideas. With the company's objective of extending itself to a mass market, *Palmer*
Corporation is attempting to cross the boundaries of marginal limitations.

The key word for the overall appearance of merchandise is continuity. A reflection of stores from Perth to Sydney, it's mirror image of the ultimate dream in pursuit for visual excellence. *(Palmer Corp News, July 1989, Volume I, No.4)*

Identification is an important criteria for life-style fashion and is ensured primarily through the adoption of brand-names. Labels therefore become synonomous with corporate image, which in turn becomes the basis for monopoly price. The corporate strategy encompassed by life-style fashion industries adheres to the styling and branding of garments through stable and 'safe' forms of expression. This ensures their saleability. The notions of stability and trust are promoted through identification with symbols usually associated with the label. It is common for garments to feature the label externally. However, as Haug points out:

The sign, and the direct and mediated promise of use-value with which it is equipped, must be completely dissociated from the specific constitution of the commodity which it nevertheless purports to denote. *(Haug, 1986, p.26)*

The advertising campaign of *Palmer Corporation* is based on the premise that it is important to create a long term theme
to establish a cohesive image for JAG branding. Their strategy involves reinforcement of a strong corporate image in advertising the brand-name JAG.

You will not see logos plastered all over the walls but rather subtle images of what Jag is all about...

(Palmer Corp News, July 1989, Volume 1. No.4)

The initial success of Palmer Corporation was based on the JAG label. JAG introduced the concept of casual clothing founded on indigo blue denim. Denim-wear currently represents only a portion of the fashion sold under the label JAG. The JAG symbol renders in paraphrase 'Jeans Are Great'. The corporation's current justification for marketing denim clothing is that it is 'A Recession Proof Investment':

Denim was born in desperate times and it seems denim is reborn in poor economic times...

Denim has more versatility, it can be tricked up with all the latest designer features or accessories and romp from season to season.

As the stockmarket goes down and interest rates go up, denim like blue chips, goes up with popularity.

(Palmer Corp News, May 1989, Volume 1. No.2)

The use of the name JAG to establish the corporate identity is possibly because it represents the most reductive way in which the company's ideology can be expressed. The introduction of metaphor and ambiguity forces a wider
reading of their basic motives. It also illuminates the contradictions inherent in the character of their alternate labels. *Palmer Corporation’s* justification for denim as a consumption priority pertains to Haug’s explanation of the current trend in marketing:

> The balance will shift from an unmediated, materially purposeful use-value to thoughts, feelings, and associations, which one links to the commodity or assumes that others must associate with it.  
> (Haug, 1986, p. 97)

*JAG’s* marketing strategies can be understood using Haug’s theory which suggests that emphasis is placed on the presentation and mise en scène of the commodities, design of sales location, its architecture, lighting, colours, background noise, and odours; the sales staff, their external appearance and behaviour; the whole business of the sale.  
> (Haug, 1986, p. 69)

The decor of *JAG* stores throughout Australia maintains a common theme, thereby reinforcing unity across the margins. The emphasis on decor establishes a ‘stage for entertainment’ (Haug, 1989, p. 69).

> Today we believe a woman wants to be excited when she goes shopping. She wants some theatre and she wants someone to acknowledge she is important.  
> (*Palmer Corp News*, April, 1989, No. 1)
JAG's advertising campaign focuses on "'attitude' sell rather than product" (Palmer Corp News, May 1989, Volume 1, No.2). Garments are arranged thematically in groupings which are known as 'stories'. The character of each 'story' is determined by fabric, trimmings and colour codes. Decoration is often in the form of screen printed insignia denoting themes and story names such as; The Aviatress, Ecology Sports, South Seas Soujourn and Blue Denim Society (which was not a denim range). The function of such branding is to establish the link between the customer and concept. The consumer is lured to find relevance in the message displayed on the surface of the garments, not only aesthetic satisfaction with style.

Designers of lifestyle fashion, like Palmer Corporation, rely on interpreting the character, habits and desires of the public representative of the statistics, 'the norm'. This style is then translated into a consumption priority. Designs are not synonymous with individual creators. Australian fashion houses, like COUNTRY ROAD and COVERS, have followed similar marketing tactics. Haug states:
The body, on whose behalf all this advertising is happening, adopts the compulsory traits of a brand-named product; in the same way, it is not the body itself but the effective advertising image which is being promoted.

(Haug, 1986, p.83)

The value of the life-style garment is determined through both its functional qualities and its surface appearance. Devices and ways of communicating are now being taken up by the fashion industry and presented purely as surface effect. Garments become a forum for simultaneous presentation of many different sorts of information. This means that the garment begins to represent something other than itself. However, it is appearance which divulges the practical purpose and character of a fashion item. The surface qualities of fashion garments are accordingly promoted to the consumer. The design becomes the expression, and communicates a social relationship. This relationship can be paralleled to the conflict of interest between buyer and seller. The consumer is primarily motivated by the use-value of a design. The trader promotes the quality of use-value but is primarily focused on the exchange-value. This function serves to ensure that aesthetic values stimulate an ongoing desire in consumers, thus preparing for them for the process of product replacement.
A continual influx of creative ideas are expressed through all traditions of dress. These are then reproduced through designer products which define the composition of fashion. This ensures the ongoing stimulation of desire in the consumer to be clothed within those standards of dress and therefore remain 'in' fashion. As Haug suggests, this can offer only illusory satisfaction, which does not adequately fulfill the desire but instead, magnifies the need for further stimulation. Haug states that "by serving people, in order to ensure their service, it brings an unending stream of desires into the open" (Haug, 1986, p.56). However, if the consumer is motivated through stimulation of desires to follow the ideal of aesthetic abstraction, they are subject to limitations because:

"Nothing is so dangerous as being too modern. One is apt to grow old fashioned quite suddenly" said Oscar Wilde. 

(The Story of Fashion, 1987, SBS)
CONCLUSION

Fashion is born, it has its roots in the past, its eyes on the future.


Two hundred years ago, Australia was settled by the English so that apart from working clothes, the only 'fashion' clothing was imported from the United Kingdom. This became known as the colonial period. Two hundred years later, the study has shown that Australia is self sufficient in the production of fashion. Fashion in Australia is in the earlier stages of development compared with the older settled areas of the world. The marketing of fashion is predominantly bound within Australian corporate structures and small business. However, it is there where the dominant Australian input ceases. Design, style, technology and most of the other factors which are necessary inputs to such an industry, became a complex web of global and local inputs.

History has seen Australia emerge from a nation which was politically, economically, and culturally dependent on the British Empire to a country which is aspiring to attain an
autonomous identity. Cultural imperialism has extended throughout Australia's history with a shift occurring within the dominant influences. It is with this post colonial period that the study is concerned.

Australian neo-colonialism is characterized by inter-imperialist rivalry and it is through these contrasting influences that the relationship between core and periphery has been established. Through the expansion of communication and information systems, American and European culture became influential. In the context of fashion, Australia's neo-colonial position is rooted in American and European tradition. Just as the American and European traditions incorporate the international core fashion capitals, the 'Australian condition' determines the primary nature of independent states.

The American and European influences in fashion are representative of the lived traditions and practices through which historical conditions and relationships amongst distinctive social groups and classes are reflected. Australia's history as a colonial subject establishes the notion that it is a nation limited within the confines of a subaltern position. This has resulted in the motivation to realise an independent
status within the world economy. The imperative for achieving this status correlates to the definitive condition of fashion, that is, the continual process of change and renewal. An ironic compromise has been necessary for Australia and its regional peripheries to participate in the global marketing network. Australia seeks to emphasize an indigenous character which will reflect unique qualities in order to reinforce notions of an independent and individual identity. However, global competitiveness has resulted in the trend towards cultural uniformity which means that for Australia, and specifically Perth as peripheral, to transcend the condition of dependency it is essential that it fulfils the mandate of representation through authoritative discourse. Mimicry provides the means by which an authentic status is perpetuated. In the global context, this means that Australia proposes notions of partial representation indicated through the repetition of the cultural traditions disseminated from the core. The practice of mimicry and the adoption of uniform marketing strategies have established global trends in the production of media and fashion design.

The intervention European, American and Australian design creates influences which are emblematic of the triadic
relationship. The impact of American and European traditions have determined contrasting influences which have been incorporated within the character of Australian media and fashion trends. Perth has adopted the character of a combination of aspects from dominant overseas sources, as well as from the Australian fashion captials.

Perth looks to mimic the ideals and lifestyle of Sydney and Melbourne, the national fashion centres. However, for the same reason that Perth has idiosyncratic and indigenous qualities, so do the national cores. Each has their own individual character which in turn mimics the international traditions. This therefore creates even greater anomalies. Perth can't be like both when the two are not like each other. There has to be an in-between which creates, with the addition of the local indigenous character, a unique quality of its own.

The socio-economic and cultural implications of the fashion/media nexus establishes an ambiguous relationship between global and local forces. The media facilitates the communication of traditions and practices emanating from dominant cultural sources: Journalists, graphic designers,
fashion editors, models, photographers, illustrators, actors and filmmakers communicate an intricate web of cross reference which creates a new vocabulary of style and attitude that are accordingly portrayed through television, the music video, pages of magazines and on film. The dissemination of fashion information is monopolized by visual media formats and it is through internationally produced texts that Perth is both directly and indirectly influenced. Local fashion design is portrayed almost exclusively through local publications. Media play an important part in helping consumers to make choices.

The fashion market in Perth is representative of a normal distribution. The European tradition services the needs of consumers interested in fashion abstraction; designs suitable for the wealthy consumer to the deviating desires of youth. The majority of consumers adopt the dominant influence in fashion; the American tradition of standardized design. This is consistent for both international and local communities.

The marketing strategies initiated through the American tradition have dictated the Australian success of standardized design. Australian fashion industries produce lifestyle concepts in design which are indicative of the capitalist ethics of the
American core. The fashion products are mass marketed throughout the Australian fashion capitals and peripheries. The concepts of lifestyle fashion are reinforced through media which targets the mass population. The economic imperatives of monopoly capitalism is reinforced through garments and fashion products which feature the corporate brand name. It is not the design or the designer that is promoted but the corporate image. Identification through corporate image proposes notions of stability and therefore 'safe' forms of aesthetic expression. Standardized fashion proposes continuity in style, thus providing little motivation for change. In other words, when a person is perceived to be wearing a lifestyle garment which features an established corporate brand name, it is connoted that they have a 'successful' life. However, the regional characteristics of Perth do not emulate American monopoly capitalist ideals. Perth does not import American fashion products, nor emulate the characteristics inherent in monopoly capitalist ideals.

It is through the structure of corporate business that lifestyle products are legitimated as representations of the 'norm'. However, it is through the intervention of the European tradition that ambiguities within the local market become
prevalent. The major influence of fashion produced in Perth is through interpretation by the national industries which produce the American concepts in standardized design. Perth designers instigate fashion concepts which, although mimicking the seasonal collections of European design, have been interpreted for practical application to the local market. National fashion houses closely evaluate the regional characteristics of the local market in order to mimic the designs within the corporate precepts of lifestyle fashion. National fashion industries therefore incorporate American marketing strategies and mimic the emulated European designs emanating from the Australian peripheries. Local designers, who incorporate financial risks, serve as the prototype for corporate industries.

While lifestyle design reinforces the economic imperatives of capitalist ideals, the European tradition interprets and continually reassesses contemporary ideals of beauty. The consumer is motivated through the introduction of aesthetic abstraction and innovative design to unceasingly adhere to proposed notions of continual change.
A binary relationship is formed between local fashion publications and local designers. However, unlike the powerful tripartite relationship formed between overseas designers, media and consumers, the local designers place little value on promoting their collections through local publications. Fashion journals produced in Perth tend to promote imported European fashions to establish the associated notions of status.

European fashion products are imported and available for purchase by consumers through small retail businesses. Such businesses cater to a wealthy minority, or alternatively to consumers who confine the purchase of designer garments to a selected minimum. The major source for designs which emulate the European tradition is through the produce of local designers. Perth consumers who aspire to be fashion pioneers enable local designers to survive within the dictates of small business. However, a characteristic of the Perth market is the lack of parochial support provided through consumers and local retail outlets. This results in a competitive local market which is characterised by the necessity to incorporate high levels of risk. Perth is subject to greater ambiguities than the more notorious core centres largely because of this risk factor.
The investigation of the fashion scene with reference to the media has provided a perspective which has not been documented in the local industry. It should be useful for future planning, both at the industry and enterprise level. Of more importance are the factors that have been identified that will be valuable for future research. Much of the industry, and especially the small manufacturer and retailer, have very little documented information so that many of their decisions must be extempore. Successful business cannot be expected to survive in this day and age without adequate and appropriate information. The corollary of this is clear; further in depth research is urgently required in an endeavour to place the industry at an economic advantage. This is particularly relevant with the current free trade philosophies including the lifting of protective tariffs.

Fashion can be seen as an aesthetic means by which a global 'common language' is established. It seems that it is necessary for peripheries to share at least some of the fashion language of the core. If peripheral regions are confined completely to the fringe, they will forever remain bound to subaltern subjection. To operate competitively within the global context it is necessary for peripheries to share part of
the common language. The media facilitates the communication of attitude and approach which predominantly comes from the standpoint of cultural traditions. Capitalism provides the dominant influence and therefore defines the boundaries. To compete effectively in the global market, local designers need to perpetuate an intrinsic protest, theory or philosophy in order to carry their concepts further. Fashion design is currently taught as a career which results in most people becoming design managers who then operate to control other people. The imperative for fashion design is the incorporation of marketing strategies. Fashion design can no longer be considered an expression of applied art. The antithesis would be to incorporate more intuitive ideas; ideas that could be considered more humanistic or natural which would result in a more educational role for designers.

Largerfeld states:

The idea is created and that is what makes fashion really interesting. It fades away, it is short lived, and in fact, short lived things can only become symbols, like Romeo and Juliet. It was a one night stand but it became the symbol of eternal young love. Fashion is also the short lived thing, and only because it is short lived, you can remember it forever.

(The Story of Fashion, 1987, SBS)
APPENDIX 1

List of Stockists for IMAGE Magazine

(IMAGE, Volume 2, Issue Number One, July/August 1990)

Angel Hearts, Bar Bzar, Black Plastic, The Blue Duck Cafe, Cafe Sport, Cagney's Cellars, Coronado Bottle Shop, Da Da's, Eldorado, Gioia, Global Cafe, Julians Cafe, John Street Cafe, Kafe Neon, L'Alba Cafe, New Editions Bookstore, Nostalgia Records, Orphans, Oxford Street Cafe, Plaistowes Bottle Shop, Sloanes, Sylvanas, 78's, Ted's, Video Connection Subiaco, Zingara, and Newsagents across the metropolitan area.
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