

The Magnetism of the Monarchy

It is a typical cool, slightly rainy mid-May week in London, 2012. Seemingly out of nowhere, hundreds of images begin to appear of an eighty-six-year-old great-grandmother whose sartorial choices tend toward colorful dyed-to-match ensembles from hat to heel, her ubiquitous Launer leather handbag on her arm. Under British law, she exceeded the legal retirement age for women over two decades earlier, but this octogenarian in overdrive still spends many of her days cutting ceremonial ribbons, shaking hands, hosting large garden parties for people she has never met, or entertaining dignitaries from around the world.

Regardless of how people feel about her or her family, they would be hard pressed to avoid her image in London—and in much of the world—during the late spring of 2012. From an optician's window on Kensington High Street, she appears encased in an ornate gold frame and surrounded by signs proclaiming a £50 discount, adorned by a bright silver tiara and sporting an oversize pair of baby-blue-rimmed sunglasses, pink lipstick, and a satisfied smile (figure 2). She also stands in cardboard-cutout form in a dress-shop window on Regent Street, next to a pouty mannequin in Union Jack leggings.

A few hundred feet away, on Piccadilly Circus, she beams at window shoppers from a seemingly endless mélange of photos taken at different stages of her life that adorn souvenir shortbread tins, coffee mugs, tea towels, and miscellaneous tchotchkes. In high-end department stores like Peter Jones and Liberty, discerning collectors can choose more elegant representations of her visage, forgoing items that bear “happy snaps.”* Yet these pervasive references to this matriarch are not always blatantly linked to commercial gains; many appear as

* A term for low-resolution images silkscreened onto typically inexpensive ceramics.



FIGURE 2. The Queen in a London optician's ad, June 2012. Photo by Cele Otnes.

indicators of respect, reverence, or restraint. Across the street from the Russell Square tube station, a sidewalk sandwich board sponsored by the quick-casual chain Au Bon Pain reminds passengers to “Keep it Clean” for her.

Six weeks later, she spectacularly trumps her own triumphant turnaround in popular opinion, in what seems destined to become her most beloved and blogged-about consumer-culture cameo. In a teleskit embedded in the opening ceremony of the London Olympics, watched live by 900 million people

around the world, she plays herself delivering secret orders to the British spy James Bond (Daniel Craig), then proceeds to “parachute jump” with him, via a stunt double, into Olympic Stadium. But even had she never participated in that event, and could only savor the official four-day celebration of her sixty years on the throne, the outcome would still have been the same. For in 2012—during the “Summer of London”¹—Britain’s Queen Elizabeth II became an icon of cool.² For a tweed-skirted persona whose image serves as cultural shorthand for conservative and correct manner and mode, and whose younger relatives often have done her image no favors in recent decades, such a turnaround in public sentiment was nothing short of miraculous.³

Yet even when some members of the Royal Family are criticized and even skewered for their decidedly unregal actions, their foibles and failings nonetheless still prove compelling for many people around the world. Tabloid-fueled British society and the increasing international outreach of online and social media mean royal missteps and debacles often are dispensed with gleeful immediacy around the globe and prove as or more compelling than their triumphs. In fact, contrary to Oscar Wilde’s observation that “the only thing worse than being talked about is not being talked about,” at times the risk to the monarchy of becoming laughingstocks, scapegoats, or cultural afterthoughts seems quite high.

Of course, since oral and written forms of cultural expression originated, depictions of rulers have ranged from fawning and flattering to borderline traitorous to outright seditious. But as more sophisticated mass media forms developed over the centuries, some modes—political cartoons, for example—became expected and accepted forms of (often devastating) commentary, especially in Britain.⁴ Furthermore, in recent years, other types of media offerings, such as opinion polls, have contributed to perceptions that the Royal Family’s appeal to the British populace was becoming more and more tenuous. After Prince Charles and Princess Diana divorced in 1996, one newspaper survey reported that “46 percent of respondents believed Charles was unfit to be king, an increase of 13 percent in two years.”⁵

Certainly the Royal Family has not been alone among monarchies in its vulnerability. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the world has seen a marked decline in the number of crowned heads, especially in Europe. In 1900, for example, monarchs ruled over almost every country on the continent. But by 2012, only ten of fifty European countries featured hereditary monarchs recognized as legitimate by their governing bodies. As we note in

our introduction, at the end of the twentieth century, a prorepublican discourse seemed to be gaining strength in Britain, with public commentary increasingly expressing apathy, anger, and downright nastiness toward the Royal Family. One result of this outcry was that the Queen agreed to pay income taxes (as had some of her forbearers),⁶ give up some historic entitlements, and even relinquish her beloved royal yacht, the HMY *Britannia*. (Supposedly, one of the few times she has cried in public was at its decommissioning ceremony in 1997). Furthermore, the outcry over the diminishing relevance of the monarchy has resulted in “the Firm” mounting a continuous and controlled campaign of image management from within. Margaret Tyler, known as an über-fan of the Royal Family, observes, “The Royals now know they have to win us over. They’re not daft.”⁷

This campaign for people’s attention and interest around the world has certainly been spurred by global gains in consumer culture, media saturation, and a heightened interest in luxury and aesthetics. Given how these phenomena dovetail with perceptions of royal lifestyles, plenty of people continue to vote with their credit cards and valorize past, present, and even future aspects of the British monarchy. To some extent, the institution has become an entity that people can purchase and possess in some fashion, producing enjoyable benefits in the process.

Of course, over its lifespan, the British monarchy often has proved contentious for a variety of reasons—especially when rulers still wielded political power. Indeed, the early warrior kings often habitually and irrevocably uprooted the lives of ordinary citizens within and beyond the boundaries of the British Isles. Furthermore, some monarchs’ decisions to defy powerful cultural institutions and place their personal goals above their subjects’ welfare often led to shattering and irrevocable social and cultural changes. Consider, for example, Henry VIII’s decision in 1534 to effectively dissolve the Catholic Church in England and appoint himself head of the Anglican Church, so he could divorce his first wife and enter into a quintet of future marriages.

In this book, we explore how and why the Royal Family maintains the level of fascination they do for many people around the world, given that scholars and subjects alike typify some British monarchs (and their heirs apparent) in the lineage as bloodthirsty, extravagant, foppish, immoral, reactionary, selfish, and even (often justifiably) criminal. Furthermore, given the numerous price points of entry into the world of royal consumption, and the choices of how best to tangibilize these representations, people are able to

deftly customize their experiences while shielding themselves from aspects they find less desirable. For example, they might choose to immerse themselves solely in royal “dark tourism,”⁸ such as the lore and gore associated with the Tower of London or, more recently, with the tragic events surrounding Princess Diana’s death. Regardless of people’s particular proclivities, we address these general questions: What do consumers gain by consuming the British Royal Family? What factors contribute to the viability and vividness of royal consumption experiences?

Before we focus on these questions in more contemporary times, it is worthwhile to remember that “royal-watching” has historically compelled much of the citizenry in what is now known as Great Britain. Until the broad-scale development of mass media in the late nineteenth century, people typically learned about activities through proclamations “nailed on the market cross, read aloud by a sheriff or other local official, or circulated and reported in village or alehouse.”⁹ Until recently, many royal rituals were regarded as private and sometimes secretive affairs of state rather than occasions for public cultural celebration. But as more citizens migrated to London and its environs, they created chronicles of their increasing presence at the processions that preceded coronations, funerals, and triumphal civic pageants celebrating victories over enemies on the battlefield, such as that described below:

When Henry V returned from Agincourt in 1415 he saw two gigantic figures . . . upon the entrance to London Bridge; on the bridge itself were “innumerable boys representing the angelic host, arrayed in white, with glittering wings.” . . . On the King’s approach . . . “sparrows and other small birds” were set free . . . an image of the Sun, “which glittered above all things,” was placed on the throne and around it . . . angels [sang and played] all kinds of musical instruments.” . . . “The city of London might, at that time, have been termed a *stage*.”¹⁰

Yet the concept of royal-watching has not always referred to adopting the presumably pleasurable stance known as the “tourist gaze.”¹¹ From 1066 until 1743, when George II was the last king to fight in battle, the British were involved in over fifty wars. During much of this “warrior king” era (aptly named since all English monarchs after William the Conqueror were male until 1553), royal watching often meant watching *out* for monarchs or, in particular, their armies. Kings and queens were under constant pressure to replenish their royal treasuries and to rouse and replace lost troops,

equipment, and transportation. Citizens resigned themselves to sacrificing crops, livestock, mounts, sons, and other resources to their authoritarian rulers to serve as militia and materiel for battle. Often these requests took the form of seizures and even midnight raids, with compensation coming only in the “satisfaction” of fulfilling one’s duty to the Crown. Of course, failure to offer up these resources could result in punishments as severe as those rained down onto the enemy.

With warrior kings often as likely to plunder their own subjects as to protect them, the notion of engaging in any kind of royal-themed touristic experiences, or of collecting souvenirs or traveling to seek royal encounters, would have been unfathomable to both rural and urban folk. As we discuss later in this book, the British economy was primarily based on agrarian and cottage-based industries until the Industrial Revolution, which began in Britain in the late eighteenth century and completely changed the socioeconomic structure of the nation, and then the world.. Before that seismic occurrence, royal commemorative items were limited in type and number—although during the Tudor era, monarchs did leverage seals, medals, coins, paintings, and even illustrations in best-selling books (including the Bible) to perpetuate and promote their own images.¹² Coins bearing royal visages were actually issued for kings ruling various sections of Britannia before William the Conqueror united the regions, and began to appear regularly by 800 A.D.¹³ But until the rise of an industrialized and urbanized Britain, “for many people, the king’s image on coins was the only likeness of the monarch which they were likely to see in their lifetimes.”¹⁴

After 1688, the British Parliament began to abate the power of the monarchy through increasing constitutional restrictions. At the same time, two other key factors reshaped the nature of “royal watching.” First, the role of the warrior king waned by the end of the eighteenth century; the metaphor was displaced by the decidedly more passive role of the monarch as diplomat (if the monarchs took much interest in ruling at all). Second, a structured and stable class system arose. Its most distinctive characteristic was the aristocratic class or landed gentry throughout England, Wales, Ireland and Scotland, which reached its heyday prior to World War I.

Throughout the reigns of most of Britain’s monarchs, royal-watching for the lower classes who lived outside of London typically involved lining the hedgerows along Britain’s village roads, where proclamations (and later, newspapers) reported that monarchs and their entourages would be traveling. Within the aristocracy, however, a more formal and demanding

type of interaction, which involved extravagant consumption, emerged. During the nineteenth and part of the twentieth centuries, the peak era of Britain's great country houses, the most important families in society were expected to extend invitations to elaborate weekend parties and resign themselves to members of royalty inviting themselves as well. Of course, most families regarded snaring members of the ruling class for their country weekends, or even overnight, as a great social coup. In probably one of the most expensive examples of anticipatory consumption, many owners of Britain's great houses even commissioned the building of ornate "royal beds." These cost thousands of pounds and were created to the aesthetic standards fit for the monarch, although most aristocrats never even knew if a royal visit would come to pass.¹⁵ Sometimes, however, the situation evolved into a classic example of being careful what one wished for. In the late nineteenth century, Prince Albert Edward's (later Edward VII) lavish tastes meant entertaining him during a house party often cost his hosts £5,000–£10,000 per weekend.* It was rumored that Lord Suffield was so desperate to be relieved of the duty and expense that he burned down his own home, Gunton Park.¹⁶ Later, when Edward VII's daughter-in-law became Queen Mary, she was known for admiring treasures at people's homes until her host and hostess got the hint and offered her the items as gifts. As a result, she acquired a reputation for winding "her way round the country houses of England vacuuming up the Meissen."^{†17}

Between the two world wars, the British aristocracy was gradually but irrevocably felled by the perfect storm of a global depression, a decline in demand for British goods around the world, the battlefield deaths and horrific injuries incurred during World War I by many sons and heirs of the great houses, and crippling changes in estate taxation laws. As a result, many of the finest families were forced to sell not only their country homes but their city residences as well—often complete with priceless works of art, jewels, and furnishings. Liquidating these assets also meant curtailing weekend house parties or eliminating them completely. Consequently, by World War II large weekend house parties had died out, shifting the sites of the Royal Family's entertainment to their own palaces and to events such as the annual presentation of upper-class debutantes at court.¹⁸

* Conservatively, £5,000 in 1890 would be equivalent to more than £450,000 (\$708,000) in 2014; www.measuringworth.com.

† Since 1710, a German manufacturer of very expensive porcelain.

The decline of the aristocracy also meant that the British upper class began to interact with the Royal Family at events that members of the lower social classes could also attend. At significant sporting events, such as Wimbledon and Royal Ascot, for example, tickets are available to the general public. Distinctions in the ways the social classes interact are still maintained even at these more democratically accessible events, but sometimes class boundaries disappear completely around their fringes. In 2005, after the wedding of Prince Charles and Camilla Parker Bowles in Windsor, many wedding guests in their tails, top hats, and “fascinators”^{*} dined at the bistro chain Café Rouge in Windsor & Eton Central train station at tables alongside more plebian spectators who had stood behind the barricades, waving as the couple’s limousine sped off after the ceremony.¹⁹

These days, spectacle-laden public activities typically signify important milestones for the Royal Family. But for the people whose passions involve following members of that particular gene pool, these occasions also provide an opportunity to commemorate the continuation of a well-chronicled, historical lineage. Of course, some family milestones clearly differ from those the average citizenry experience in their own families. After all, only royal personages can be the central figures of events like coronations, or even “lesser” ceremonies, such as Charles’s investiture as the Prince of Wales at Caernarfon Castle in 1969.

In sum, on both the interpersonal and commercial fronts, the ability to engage with the Royal Family has become increasingly democratic. Collectors from all income and societal levels can own whatever types of commemoratives from whatever eras they desire, as long as they have the time, energy, and money required to acquire them. Of course, as is true with any constellation of consumption activities, people’s engagement with the Royal Family depends on who they themselves are, what they value, and how they believe their involvement with the monarchy, or the individuals within the institution, contributes to or reflects their own identities.

The variety of choices royal consumers can make in the marketplace is almost staggering, and the ways people can engage with the British monarchy within a global consumer culture range from mainstream to downright eccentric. For example, some people choose only to skim the cream and participate in the most elite and expensive royal-related offerings. “Thomas,” a successful American stockbroker and self-professed Anglophile, had gar-

^{*} Decorated headpieces, often featuring feathers and beads.

nered enough income to retire by his late forties.²⁰ He spends four months of each year in London, indulging his passion for English history and adding to his high-end collection of gilded and crested royal commemoratives. He reports that his favorite pieces to collect are those produced by Minton, a famous English pottery brand until the postwar era that often cost thousands of pounds. During another four months of the year, he lives in Cape Town, South Africa, where he immerses himself in a social group composed largely of Anglophiles.²¹ He spends the remaining months in the United States, where much of his collection resides in his closets and china cabinets.

On the other side of the coin are collectors more concerned with quantity than quality, and who may not be as discriminating (or in fact, discriminating at all) in terms of the items they possess. Their collections might include pieces that would be described as royal kitsch, or even more critically, “tat,” a British term for tacky or tasteless items. Collector extraordinaire Margaret Tyler, to whom we devote an entire chapter, identifies one piece she owns as “the ugliest thing I’ve got. . . . I know it’s supposed to be Charles and Diana, but they look like the Everly Brothers. . . . I thought it was a vase, but it’s got a hole in the back.”²²

Unlike Margaret, who allows this piece to commingle with higher-end items, some collectors find themselves drawn to kitsch, particularly the vulgar variants. Often, however, they separate these from more reverential commemorative varieties. “John” began our tour of his home by proudly discussing the items in large glass cabinets filled with gilded commemoratives produced by many of Britain’s stalwart potteries. Toward the end of the tour we ventured into a small upstairs office, where he proudly showed off a set of Diana “matryoshka,” or Russian-style wooden nesting dolls (figure 3). The largest was of Princess Diana, and the other male figures, in descending size and importance, represented those with whom she had been romantically involved.*²³ Yet even collectors who do not venture into raunchier realms still can opt for a display that is more silly than sacred, by acquiring items such as a mug displaying a sketch of Prince Charles with his ear forming the handle, William and Catherine wedding toilet paper, or a caricature of the Royal Family on motorcycles in racy, revealing leather outfits.

A key reason to understand this full spectrum of royal representations is that doing so highlights the differences in consuming the *British* Royal

* John then related the tasteless logic behind this nesting set, noting that all the men had “been in Diana.”



FIGURE 3. Diana, Princess of Wales nesting dolls. Photo by Cele Otnes.

Family versus other monarchies around the globe. For example, Thailand is not considered an absolute monarchy, but it is nevertheless illegal to speak ill of its Royal Family, and being caught doing so can result in jail time. So it is highly unlikely any Thai retailer would risk offering, say, a coffee mug that pokes even gentle fun at King Bhumibol Adulyadej's extreme wealth or his world record as the longest-reigning monarch.²⁴ Furthermore, googling the terms *Oman Royal Souvenirs* or *Saudi Royal Souvenirs* results only in pictures of British Royal Family memorabilia that shops in those countries offer.

It might be assumed that the few remaining monarchies in Europe would be motivated to tailor their royal-related merchandise to a broad array of touristic tastes. Here too, however, the range of royal-themed goods, services, and experiences on the Continent in no way approaches what can be acquired in Britain. Even with a spate of recent royal weddings in these countries, the range of monarchic merchandise is decidedly narrow. When

Prince Albert of Monaco married his longtime girlfriend, Charlene Wittstock, in 2011, the press reported that just days prior to the ceremony, she had tried to board a plane and return to her native South Africa. At the time, rumors were swirling that Albert recently had fathered his third illegitimate child. Commenters on stories appearing online offered up such advice as “If she had had any doubts whatsoever, she should have bolted,” or they mentioned Prince Albert’s two other illegitimate children, the couple’s age difference (Charlene was thirty-three to his fifty-three when they married), or his receding hairline. Yet souvenirs for the event did not reflect such pointed commentary. Instead, shops in Monte Carlo offered only official and more refined (code to collectors of royal kitsch for bland) commemorative coins, postage stamps, fans, and ceramics.

Contrast this muted mercantile response with the types of artifacts people can find in Britain to satisfy the “curious psychological need for royal narratives and for imagined participation in royal lives.”²⁵ Even when Charles and Diana divorced and the resulting negative public sentiment led many to assume that the future of the monarchy was tenuous, manufacturers responded with commemoratives of that event. One piece even satirized the divorce by leveraging one of the most traditional forms of commemorative—the souvenir plate—by depicting an image of the couple with a large black crack down the center.

Some European countries feature monarchies whose members also make themselves accessible to their subjects, and who, one might assume, would be open to whimsical or even critical retail representations. But even in countries like Norway, where marketers eagerly offer tourists a plethora of moose- and troll-related souvenirs, the few royal items and touristic experiences available are both bland and respectful (when they exist at all).

In short, marketplace representations of the British Royal Family run the gamut from what anthropologist Helaine Silverman labels “portable royalty” (e.g., teaspoons, thimbles, coffee mugs, and key chains) to large-scale, expensive choices. These include refrigerators boasting full-size William and Catherine engagement photo decals, and replicas of royal housewares and jewelry made of gold, silver, porcelain, and other fine materials priced in the thousands of pounds. Furthermore, items can satisfy any level of taste and immersion desired. Yet such a range also reveals and reinforces a clear ambivalence about the role of the monarchy in Britain, supporting the fact that for many people, the institution reflects the “glamour of backwardness.”²⁶ Even consumers at opposite ends of the spectrum of royal

consumption seem comfortable with this cultural ambivalence, often finding support in brand communities or “tribes”²⁷ that help resolve any inconsistencies within experiences. If the Royal Family often is interpreted as a mixed bag with respect to its contemporary cultural relevance, people still reward the pervasiveness and persistence of the institution, and of the members within it, by voting with their wallets at souvenir kiosks, ticket counters at royal residences, retail shops, antique stores and flea markets, theaters, and online outlets.

Placing this mixed-bag metaphor under a bit deeper scrutiny on a cultural level, it can be argued that for some, the Royal Family represents contested territory. Simply put, it often serves as a source of pride during certain times in history, and a source of shame during others. For many republicans in Britain and those whose loyalties lie more with their roots in Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales, the Royal Family often represents an underlying source of irritation that during key events in history expands in importance, or rather, “gets inflamed, like an appendix.”²⁸ Some people, like artist Lydia Leith, even use their entrepreneurial skills to create souvenirs reflecting people’s ambivalence, displeasure, or fatigue with the Royal Family. Prior to the 2011 royal wedding, she invented the “Throne Up” sick bag, ostensibly to be used by those standing in the London streets to observe the event. After sales outpaced her expectations, she extended her merchandise line to include Diamond Jubilee and royal baby sick bags as well.

Disentangling people’s feelings about the British monarchy is a complex process, since so many of the cultural narratives that apply to the Royal Family are inextricably linked to deeply entrenched, iconic aspects of national identity and heritage. Consider, for example, the visuals associated with English/British heritage: bucolic castles with heraldic flags fluttering from their turrets, the material culture based on chivalry and knighthood, gracious and elegant gardens, rolling landscapes and moors, and sedate rivers that have seen many stately processions of royal barges. Furthermore, another key element of Britain’s brand stable since the 1500s is William Shakespeare, who wrote ten plays about English kings, as well as others about real and fictional noble and royal figures. A mixed bag the Royal Family may be, but it seems indisputable that engaging with them in the marketplace contributes greatly to tourists’ affinity for England (and to a lesser extent, for Scotland as well). Furthermore, the salience of the Royal Family among tourists as icons of British consumer culture may be gaining in importance as cultural practices and touristic experiences that are under-

stood as quintessentially British, such as high tea and visits to revered sites like Stonehenge,* become threatened with extinction.

We are certainly not the first authors to discuss the Royal Family as an object of consumer, or even touristic, gaze—as the recently published *Royal Tourism* attests.²⁹ Nor are we even the first to conceptualize it as a brand. In recent years, it has become apparent that St. James's Palace, the administrative arm that handles image management and public relations for the Royal Family, understands the value of applying and executing sophisticated branding and positioning techniques. Increasingly, journalists also have latched onto the concept of the British-monarchy-as-brand, both when it seems to be in favor and when it is struggling. In 2001, an essay in Britain's *New Statesman* described the Royal Family as “just another brand which happens, like Marks & Spencer† . . . to look somewhat tarnished and outdated.”³⁰ Ten years later, the French journalist Julie Guérineau observed that Prince William's marriage to Catherine Middleton would help modernize “the image of one of the oldest British brands”³¹ and result in over £200 million (\$337 million) in memorabilia sales.

But to understand what people mean when they bandy about the term *brand* to describe the British Royal Family, it is important to revisit the roots of the word. An analysis of over one hundred articles by two marketing scholars determined that *brand* actually describes twelve distinct concepts.³² These were further classified as pertaining either to “input” (aspects of the brand managed and delivered by the company) or “output” (those that consumers and other stakeholders contribute). Ultimately, they argued, a brand can be understood as a complex value system for a product that a firm creates, communicates, and manages. Marketing scholar Marie-Agnès Parmentier offers a specific definition of a brand as “a repository of meanings fueled by a combination of marketers' intentions, consumers' interpretations, and numerous sociocultural networks' associations.”³³

Extensive work by the British scholar John Balmer and his colleagues focuses on the types of values managers of monarchic brands should attend to, in order to maintain relevance and resonance with stakeholders. Balmer argues that a monarchy is a “corporate heritage brand,” one coalescing around a core promise that links consumers to a “material testimony [and] a set of

* Two major highways have been built in close proximity to the landmark.

† A middle-market chain, also known as “Marks” or “M&S.” In 1998, it became the first British retailer to earn a pretax profit of £1 billion.

practices concerned with the continuity, persistence and substantiality of collective identity in the past, present and future.”³⁴ Basing their research on actual interactions with members of the Swedish Royal Family, he and his coauthors identify eight *Rs* that monarchies need to manage to preserve the royal corporate-heritage identity: royal, religious, regal, ritual, relevant, respected, responsive, and regulation.”³⁵ An important point is that these eight dimensions emanate from their focus on marketing strategy: that is, they reflect recommendations emanating from study of the monarchy itself with respect to successfully maintaining and managing its repository of meanings. In other words, referring to a distinction we noted above, the strategic perspective on monarchic branding focuses on the input from the corporate entity itself.

We recognize the value and importance of the work by Balmer and his colleagues. Yet we believe that understanding the Royal Family as a brand requires exploring output elements as well, or those aspects consumers and other stakeholders identify as important and desirable. One would hope and expect that what the “Firm” considers critical to its success would overlap to some degree with what other stakeholders seek from it. Our nine-year immersion into the brand supports that assumption to some degree. Our intention is to complement and expand the “input” perspective and in no way diminish the importance of Balmer and his colleagues’ work. We believe our exploration of the experiences of consumers and stakeholders, coupled with our deep dive into the literature on branding, tourism, and related topics, enables us to provide a well-rounded understanding of the Royal Family brand.

Based on the perspectives of parties outside the corporation, we present our conceptualization of the Royal Family as a composite of five types of brands—an entity we will refer to as the Royal Family Brand Complex (henceforth, the RFBC; see figure 4). Furthermore, we believe that each brand component within the RFBC contributes one or more unique dimensions that enable it to retain its allure and to support the key narratives used to coproduce goods, services, and experiences related to the brand. These core brand elements, and the fundamental benefits of each, contribute separately or in combination into the many different ways people experience and enjoy the RFBC.

The first type of brand we discuss is the *global brand*. We have already alluded to the popularity of the British monarchy in terms of viewership levels of royal-related activities. In the ensuing chapters, we will continually



FIGURE 4. The Royal Family Brand Complex.
Courtesy of Mark Otnes.

demonstrate the popularity of the RFBC on the global stage. Balmer notes that because the Queen is the sovereign of the United Kingdom and fifteen other realms (not to mention head of the Commonwealth of Nations), she is “*de facto*, sixteen Queens rolled into one.”³⁶ Furthermore, the increasing appeal of the consumer-culture ethos around the world, which touts the belief that goods, services, and experiences are central to achieving life’s goals (and perhaps to an extent constitute its meaning), has led to a corresponding increase in interest in the RFBC.

In particular, the growth of the middle class in the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China), which encompass 25 percent of the world’s landmass and 40 percent of its population, has opened up new opportunities for consumers to enjoy discretionary purchases such as global leisure travel. Shopping is often touted as one of the most popular touristic activities in the world, and gift giving is even more important within most Asian cultures than in Western ones. As a result, many royal-themed retailers and touristic sites have experienced an upsurge in retail sales as the reservoir of global tourists to Britain expands.

Of course, there will likely always be a subset of global consumers to whom the Royal Family means little or nothing. Those who have no access to media infrastructures or global representations of consumer culture obviously come to mind. Even in countries with histories that have long been intertwined with Britain (such as India or former African colonies within the British Empire), huge subsets of people subsist at the bottom of the pyramid. Even if they are aware of the Royal Family, it is doubtful they follow them with much commercial or cultural fervor. Furthermore, others within

and outside Britain may adopt a decidedly “semi-detached”^{*} posture—preferring to ignore the monarchy on an everyday basis but entering into the cultural conversation when it seems the socially appropriate thing to do.

The key dimension of the RFBC experience that aligns most closely with its global-brand component is the *fairy tale*. This literary genre is understood by sociolinguists to be a subset of the folktale, itself a universal form of narrative. Like other folktales, fairy tales began as orally transmitted narratives and have been found all over the world, dating from as early as 100–200 C.E. in the Roman Empire and the third century C.E. in India.³⁷ Traditionally, these stories are laced with heroes and heroines, fanciful creatures who assist these protagonists with overcoming obstacles in their quests, and a happy ending that depicts the hero or heroine fulfilling his or her quest and destiny. It is important to note that neither fairies nor animal helpers are required in contemporary versions of fairy tales, but all still share the central thematic motif of the underdog proving his or her worth through trials and then gaining his or her heart’s desire. The fairy tale is thus essentially one of character trumping all—with the hero or heroine expected to possess the traits of compassion, cleverness, creativity, and persistence (as captured by Catherine Middleton’s nickname of “Waity Katie” during her prolonged courtship with Prince William prior to their 2011 wedding).

In fact, the centrality of the fairy tale to the RFBC surfaces most visibly in the discourse surrounding recent royal weddings. It would be impossible to account for the appeal of the weddings of Charles and Diana, William and Catherine, and even that of the Queen and Prince Philip, without drawing parallels to the romantic stories in this genre.[†] But besides romances, other types of fairy tales also exist in the royal canon. Most recently (as the recent film *The King’s Speech* portrays), George VI initially was the shy, stammering “spare” whose brother’s abdication forced him onto the throne. Hampered by a serious speech impediment, he sought assistance from Lionel Logue, who helped the new King through rigorous training and practice. George VI rewarded his “helper” (as Logue would be understood in the fairy tale genre) by awarding him the title of Commander of the Royal Victorian Order in 1944.

The global aspect of the fairy-tale dimension of the RFBC has received huge support from that great creator and disseminator of fairy tales, the

* A “semi-detached,” or a “semi,” is the British term for a duplex.

† Although a member of both the Greek and Danish royal families, Philip essentially was an impoverished suitor, as his family had been forced to flee Greece in 1922.

Walt Disney Company. Disney's first feature film, *Snow White and Seven Dwarves*, released in 1937, was royal themed, and the studio has released ten movies in which plots revolve around underdogs gaining the hands of princes or princesses. In the past few decades, the biggest change in the way people consume films and television programs is their ability to watch them ad infinitum at their leisure. In other words, viewers' experiences are no longer restricted by the length of cinematic runs or the number of times programs air on television. Furthermore, the development of transmedia consumption, or the delivery of similar or related content across a variety of media platforms,³⁸ means that children all over the world can now dress up in Disney costumes, watch Disney films, peruse Disney storybooks, and watch the Disney Channel on a variety of high-tech devices all at the same time. The importance of royal characters to the Disney oeuvre is reinforced by visits to the Disney theme parks, now located in five countries, or by vacations on Disney cruise ships. All of this prince-and-princessing bolsters the idea that royalty and its trappings are worthy of being idolized around the world. The stories reinforce the message that, especially for a girl, life in a castle with a bona fide Prince Charming is the happiest ending she can wish for (never mind how problematic feminists find this interpretation).

That the heir apparent to the British throne and his successor both chose commoner wives now makes royal fairy tales seem even more attainable across the globe.* This aspect of the RFBC has received support from the European royal families who have seen their members marry commoners as well. In 2010, for instance, Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden married her personal trainer, Daniel Westling. Prior to her marriage, Crown Princess Mette-Marit of Norway not only was a commoner but she was a single mother who admitted to a rebellious past.

The second brand component that helps define the RFBC is the *human brand*. Of late, there has been much interest in marketing circles in making distinctions between brands containing inanimate objects and those composed of people. Matthew Thomson, who has researched human brands, notes that one important distinction between these brands and their nonhuman counterparts is that consumers typically form much stronger and more permanent emotional bonds with human brands. He found that people claimed to form emotional connections and to experience more meaningful

* Lady Diana Spencer wed Prince Charles in 1981; Camilla Parker Bowles wed Prince Charles in 2005; Catherine Middleton married Prince William in 2011.

lives with “actors, comedians, models, directors, radio personalities, writers, singers, athletes, musicians, politicians, and royalty.”³⁹

Even the most autocratic, tyrannical members of the RFBC still meet the basic definition of a human brand—that is, they were alive for a period of time. Yet it was not until very recently that the monarchs or their relatives even felt the need to make themselves accessible to their subjects. Some, like Victoria, simply did not grasp the importance of adding an accessible (or even visible) human touch to the brand. Many credit Diana, Princess of Wales, for reinforcing the lesson that “in the context of human brands, it is not just quantity [of interaction] but also quality that matters.”⁴⁰ Nevertheless, curtsying to the Queen or other members of the Royal Family and shaking hands across the barricades are likely to be the only kinds of activities consumers can expect when engaging with the RFBC, given the strict rules of royal protocol. For example, although bowing and curtsying to the Royal Family are no longer mandatory, rules like “Do not speak unless spoken to,” “Don’t touch the Queen,” and if eating a meal with her, “Don’t go to the loo . . . for the love of God”⁴¹ demonstrate that the RFBC (or at least, its handlers) still supports the manufacture of distance from some stakeholders.*

We believe the human-brand dimension that contributes most to the viability of the RFBC is the fiasco. From the perspective of human-brand management, the biggest challenge stems from the fact that royal personages are, indeed, human. Unlike the box of washing powder Prince Charles refused to be compared to when the subject of crafting his image arose, human beings often are quite unpredictable—and often negatively so. In contrast to tragedies, which we label as sad and unexpected events (e.g., Prince Albert’s death at age forty-two), or to events enmeshed in political intrigue (e.g., the deaths of kings in wars or Charles I’s execution), fiascos are outcomes that reflect the Royal Family members’ lapses or failures in judgment and may require reputational repair. Since the 1990s, the younger members of the Royal Family have served as the sources of most fiascos. Although many of these former “human brands” are no longer in the familial fold, Prince Harry’s antics (wearing a Nazi uniform at a Halloween party or, as recently as 2012, enjoying nude strip billiards in Las Vegas) have served

* Dickie Arbiter, the Queen’s former press secretary, disputes these rules, noting that only one is actually obligatory. Upon first addressing the Queen, one should refer to her as “Your Majesty,” after which it is permissible to use “Ma’am, as in ham.

as a source of entertainment for those who enjoy rubbernecking during the unfolding of royal missteps. Furthermore, as depicted in *The Queen*, many people regarded Elizabeth II's inability to recognize how much her subjects wished her to act as the public face of mourning after Diana's death as a fiasco as well.*

Fiascos make important contributions to the RFBC in at least two ways. First, they provide an added entrée into consuming the monarchy for those claiming to be less interested in its material aspects and more attuned to its historical dimensions. Many people (including academics, who have built entire careers doing so) immerse themselves in understanding the RFBC's less desirable decisions and actions because of the ways these changed history. Although Henry VIII's tumultuous reign often comes to mind, decisions of other monarchs, or those in their entourages, have had similarly devastating consequences. The irony, of course, is that a plethora of material culture (e.g., books, tours, and videos) supports the interests of those who claim interest in RFBC's history rather than its commercial aspects.

A second reason fiascos support the RFBC is that they help make the family and institution objects of empathy, as ordinary people can relate to the consequences incurred after lapses in judgment. The distance is reduced between monarchs—whose coronations hint at links to divinity and perhaps even immortality—and the “mere mortals” who seek to know about them. Fiascos help reinforce what marketing scholar Stephen Brown and his colleagues describe as the desirable aspect of “brand ambiguity.”⁴² Such ambiguity stems from three dimensions within a brand's overarching narrative: (1) confusions (e.g., why Edward VIII would renounce his birthright for a twice-divorced American woman who admitted she was “nothing to look at”); (2) contradictions (e.g., Edward VII's reputation upon death as the “people's king,” when as Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, it was claimed that his lecherous and gluttonous ways brought “the monarchy to the verge of destruction”);⁴³ and (3) cumulations—or multiple meanings (consider how the saga of Henry VIII's six wives has been spun in myriad mediated forms).

A third brand component of the RFBC—one that also shares some overlap with the human brand—is the *family brand*. Although all family brands

* Royal fiascos are as old as the lineage itself. When William the Conqueror was crowned on Christmas Day 1066, he ordered his army to suppress any protests. Jittery guards mistook the crowd's enthusiasm inside Westminster Abbey as signs of an impending riot and set fire to the surrounding houses.

are human, the reverse is not true; family brands are human brands composed of kinship networks. As such, family brands typically offer those engaged with them two distinct types of touch points—the personalities of the individual family members and the narratives that highlight relational dynamics within the kinship circle.* (An example from the United States illustrates this point nicely. A recent article about Chelsea Clinton observes that she is “the product of two of the most powerful brands in the world. Now she’s finally carving out her own identity—by joining the family business.”)⁴⁴ Given the ubiquity of the family as a key social structure throughout the world, the global commercial appeal of such entities as the Beckhams, the Coppelas, and the Kardashians or the dynastic power of the Bushes, the Gandhis, and the Kennedys should not be too surprising.

Obviously, a family dynasty preoccupied with its own succession and propagation offers a potentially rich template for narratives that enhance or detract from the brand. Germane to the RFBC complex, however, is the fact that family brands, which are “imbued with cultural resonance . . . that is, rich symbolic and functional meanings, tend to hold stronger positions in the marketplace, even when their meanings are contested.”⁴⁵ While we recognize the tautological aspect of this statement, the most significant dimension we believe the family brand contributes to the RFBC is, quite simply, family. In truth, the idea of kings or queens touting themselves as heads of a Royal Family is relatively new to the dynasty. Some monarchs actually downplayed their relationships with family members—especially those who were close to them in the line of succession. Often, they would banish members from court, exile them to faraway locations, lock them away in prison, or even have them killed.

Free from troublesome relatives, monarchs could then focus on shaping their own images as charismatic individuals rather than members of kin networks. Kevin Sharpe argues that Henry VIII was the first monarch who understood the concept of crafting an individual personal brand for himself, centuries before marketers honed the concept. Focusing on his “personal monarchy—adult, male, strong, brave, decisive, authoritarian,” Henry was clearly a human brand who chose to downplay the family aspects of his persona (perhaps for obvious reasons, given his marital history and rocky relationships with his daughters).⁴⁶

* A third aspect of the RFBC’s family brand component is that it reinforces the thousand-plus-year blood ties of the entire Royal lineage—lending it not only cultural and historical credence but also much rarer biogenetic clout.

Almost three hundred years after Henry VIII's reign, Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert, began to shift the paradigm of the Royal persona from one focused heavily on the monarch to one that was decidedly more family-friendly. Albert purportedly was one of the first to use the phrase *Royal Family*, reinventing the unit as "a beacon of bourgeois domesticity. Using the new medium of photography, he projected an image of queen and consort as adoring couple, surrounded by obedient, subdued children."⁴⁷ Of course, having nine children, almost all of whom married royalty themselves, certainly enhanced the family feel of the lineage. All future British monarchs, except for Edward VIII, who was unmarried while he reigned, subsequently supported and enhanced this family-brand image. Some, like the Queen's father, George VI, even contributed their own "slogans" to the family brand; he was fond of calling himself, his wife, and his two daughters "us four." The Queen and Prince Philip also contributed to the family-brand dimension, not only by having four children but also through their long marriage and her close relationships with her sister, Princess Margaret, and with the Queen Mother.

The family-brand dimension of the RFBC was once again brought into high relief during the 1990s and early 2000s, when three of the Queen's children divorced and the Queen Mother and Princess Margaret passed away. Again, because family brands are also human ones, these interludes provided people with opportunities to experience empathy and extend sympathy. By the mid-1990s, one-third of all marriages in Britain were dissolving before their fifteenth anniversaries. Our key royal informant, Margaret Tyler, even observed, "Charles and Camilla . . . are role models in a way for divorced families who are making second marriages . . . because it's happening all the time. But if people see it happening in the Royal Family, it makes them feel better."⁴⁸

We noted earlier that our perspective on royal branding overlaps a bit with Balmer's more strategically oriented conceptualization. It is this next component of the RFBC, the *heritage brand*, where this overlap is most obvious. Balmer and his colleagues offer five characteristics of heritage brands that connect them to key points in their own and others' history: a track record, or the ability to deliver value over a long period of time; longevity (although this alone does not guarantee success); core values that guide policies and actions; the use of symbols; and a history important to their own identity.⁴⁹

With respect to heritage branding, we believe one key dimension the RFBC contributes to that component is fanfare. For consumers and critics alike, probably no activities stoke emotional linkages to the British monarchy

more than its public rituals, many of which are rooted in ancient customs. Even routine, repetitious, and relatively low-key rituals like the Changing of the Guard at Buckingham Palace or Windsor Castle are laden with highly aesthetic material elements, such as brightly colored regimental uniforms, beautifully groomed animals, musicians, and of course, a palatial backdrop. Each activity is carefully planned and enacted by practiced professionals who take their work very seriously, and each is observed by onlookers with no role other than enjoying the artifacts, scripts, performance roles, and the presence of an audience—all of which are required for rituals to retain their cultural vitality.⁵⁰

One of the most lavish royal rituals is the coronation of a new monarch. These events predate William the Conqueror, because the various kings who ruled over sections of England held crowning ceremonies before he united much of the landmass under a single rule.* In addition to the processions of monarchs and dignitaries that mark the occasion as a truly global recognition of the British Crown, the coronation ceremony incorporates scriptures, hymns, and anointment by oil to affirm that the new monarch has been chosen by God. This aspect of the event has its roots in the divine right of kings—a doctrine asserting that monarchs are not required to answer to human authority.⁵¹ The anointing was considered the most sacred aspect of the service—so sacred, in fact, that the Queen did not allow that part of her coronation to be filmed.

The fact that many royal cultural rituals stem from ancient (or at least old) practices does not preclude them from adapting to the times when doing so seems prudent. In fact, some modernization even seems incongruous and contributes to the RFBC's ambiguity. These adaptations include incorporating the themes from *Star Wars* and *Game of Thrones* into the repertoires of the bands playing at the Changing of the Guard, or the Royal Artillery Band's rendition of Stevie Wonder's "Isn't She Lovely" during the military salute to the newborn Princess Charlotte in May 2015. But sometimes, spontaneous decisions during these rituals seem welcome and newsworthy—as when Prince William kissed his new bride Catherine not once but twice during the Royal Family's appearance on the balcony of Buckingham Palace after their wedding.

* The liturgy was originally devised by St. Dunstan for the coronation of King Edgar, which took place in Bath in 973 C.E. Dunstan's service still forms the basis for the modern ceremony.

Finally, we argue that the last brand component of the RFBC is the *luxury brand*. Once the purview of the extreme upper echelons of society and protected by sumptuary laws that dictated the types of fabrics and colors people could own, the market for luxury brands has been expanding since the turn of the nineteenth century. During that period, philosophical and political shifts toward democratization, improvements in standards of living, increased globalization, and forms of communication made luxury goods familiar and even accessible to many in the middle class. But the Royal Family still enjoys two kinds of luxury that cannot be bought—namely, the luxuries of *exception* and *exemption*. Simply put, the Queen is afforded the privilege of opting out of many routine cultural norms required for all other people. She is the only driver in Britain whose cars do not require license tags, nor does she require a passport to travel. She celebrates her birthday on different days in different continents. She can even take liberties with luxury brands that other consumers cannot: “The royal mascots [of St. George poised over a slain dragon] are the only exceptions that Rolls Royce will allow to replace their own Spirit of Ecstasy on the hood of their cars.”⁵²

In the twenty-first century, the marketplace for luxury brands continues to skyrocket. In 2007, their global value was estimated at \$263 billion, a 31 percent increase over the previous five years.⁵³ Contributing to this growth are the demands within the rapidly increasing middle classes in Asia, the Middle East, and South America, which crave the elite status that luxury brands can convey. Jean-Noël Kapferer, who has written extensively about luxury goods and brands, defines them as multisensory, highly aesthetic, and possessing a strong “human content” (that is, they are handmade or produced by services rendered by a human). Furthermore, he notes, a luxury product is rooted in a culture: “In buying a Chinese luxury product (silk, let’s say), you are buying not just a piece of material but a little bit of China as well.”⁵⁴

In addition to the standard luxury-brand houses, such as Cartier, Chanel, and Dior, we add the House of Windsor (the moniker of the current Royal Family since 1917) and the House of Tudor, particularly when Henry VIII and Elizabeth I reigned. Furthermore, we assert that the royal-luxury brand dimension receives support from two key sources. The first of these is fashion. Recent royal-watchers could not be blamed for associating fashion almost exclusively with Princess Diana, because her elevation to superstardom was based on her mediated persona as one part supermom, one part

supermodel, and one part supersaint. But as noted above, fashion was a fixture within the monarchy long before Diana joined the family. Elizabeth I, herself a clever seamstress of her own brand, purportedly owned three thousand gowns, which grew “increasingly elaborate with the passing years. . . . [They] asserted her wealth and power [and featured] images and symbols of the representation of the Virgin Queen.”⁵⁵ Some monarchs were specifically known as clothes horses or even dandies. George IV (r. 1820–1830), for example, was reputed to be “a man of style, a man of taste . . . determined to create palaces that which would rival any in Europe.” Furthermore, he “did not follow fashions, he set them . . . [abandoning] multi-colored ‘peacock’ fashions in favor of . . . smart, black, sombre dress pioneered by George and Brummell in the 1790s.”⁵⁶ Furthermore, Edward VII was known to be extremely particular about dress; he even dictated to his mistresses (and their family members) what they were to wear on certain occasions.

Even those kings and queens who did not perceive clothing or décor to be essential to their identities were still monarchs, after all, so they typically sported apparel made of the choicest fabrics and with the highest level of craftsmanship. Most readers probably perceive the Queen as a middle-aged or even elderly woman whose interests lie more with colts and corgis than with couture. Yet it is worth remembering that as a princess and a young monarch, she was turned out for affairs of state in gowns by the leading designers of her day, including her favorite, Norman Hartnell. Although not considered an arbiter of high fashion, the Queen possesses her own style, which centers on achieving maximum visibility when among the public. As such, she typically wears bright but tasteful ensembles, and always carries a clear umbrella so her face can be seen even in the rain.*

These days, both traditional and social media take for granted that the fashion choices of younger members of the Royal Family are of interest to their readers and viewers. Usually extensive coverage of the topic focuses on the women’s choices—with extra column inches and footage devoted to controversial ones and to rapidly disseminating copycat buying surges. Of course, the luxury items associated with the RFBC extend well beyond the realm of clothing, as the tourists who troop through lushly decorated royal residences laden with priceless armor, art, ceramics, and tapestries can attest.

* In 2014, the retailer Hammacher Schlemmer advertised “Her Majesty’s Umbrella,” made by Fulton for the Queen, for \$49.95. The ad featured a Queen look-alike under the umbrella, sporting “her” trademark tasteful monochrome ensemble.

The second key aspect associated with the luxury-brand component of the RFBC is fortune. The Royal Family does not crack the top ten in terms of the wealthiest monarchies in the world; the three richest are those of Thailand, Brunei, and Saudi Arabia, in that order. Nevertheless, the Queen's net worth is estimated at half a billion dollars. When the wealth of the Crown (the institution of the British monarchy) is figured in, the picture changes dramatically. *Forbes* estimates that it possesses over £6 billion (\$10 billion) in art, real estate, rare books and manuscripts, and Royal swans, among other assets.⁵⁷ Some of these may be impossible to value, but a recent assessment valued Buckingham Palace alone at close to £1 billion (\$1.68 billion).⁵⁸

There are two key ways these assets impact consumers of the RFBC. First, the monarchy provides access to many of the rarities in its possession so the public can enjoy them. For example, the Queen's Gallery at Buckingham Palace regularly stages themed art exhibits that consist of items from the Royal Collection. Likewise, the Round Tower at Windsor Castle houses the most comprehensive group of drawings by Leonardo da Vinci in the world, and these are regularly rotated, and even toured, for public viewing. Thus the monarchy makes much of its assets visible—and therefore accessible and open to consumption by tourists and British citizenry alike—through patronage, preservation, and presentation.

Second, the immediate members of the Royal Family possess the means to live a lifestyle of unfettered consumption if they so choose. Within the inner circle, however, different family members exhibit very different standards with respect to embracing such opulence. Royal biographer Sally Bedell Smith claims that the Queen “knows what everything costs and economizes when necessary. Guests at routine Buckingham Palace receptions are served wine, potato chips and nuts, while at [Charles's parties at] Clarence House they get gourmet hors d'oeuvres . . . floral displays and theatrical lighting.”⁵⁹ Regardless, people's vicarious consumption of the RFBC lifestyle, especially through television programs, films, and other visual phenomena, accounts for much of the appeal of the monarchy.

We acknowledge that for many, the RFBC holds no appeal whatsoever, and in fact may be antithetical to their interests or values. We recognize that even during times when the popularity of the Royal Family seems to drown out criticism, there are still plenty of people who align with anti-monarchists (those against the institution of monarchy itself), anti-Royalists (who oppose certain or all members of the current family), or those critical of the



FIGURE 5. Resisting at Trooping the Colour, 2012. Photo by Cele Otnes.

monarchy or its personages on aesthetic, ideological, or other grounds. Sometimes these protestors make themselves visible, even during highly celebrated rituals such as the Queen's Trooping the Colour parade (figure 5). Visit any website reporting on a recent royal event and inevitably a consistent stable of critical themes emerges: the Royal Family is a waste of taxpayers' money and lacks gainful employment; the young royals are trussed-up bimbos (if female) or embarrassments with no sense of propriety or self-restraint (e.g., Prince Harry); they are painful reminders of a class system that fosters an unequal society; or perhaps worst of all, they are not even (or are barely) English.

People have voiced their opposition to the monarchy as long as records have been kept of its existence. But as the power of British monarchs contin-

ued to recede and the monarchy moved to a reign-versus-rule model, criticism began to focus more on how much the institution costs to maintain, rather than on specific political concerns. Our intention is neither to enter into a debate about whether the Royal Family is worth what it costs, nor to weigh in on whether the monarchy represents negative vestiges of colonialism and patrician rule. We are fully aware that these issues are real and raw for some but have set our own views aside to explore the influence and interaction that the RFBC exerts within consumer culture.

As table 1 shows, the three-plus decades following the marriage of Prince Charles and Princess Diana represent a particularly dynamic period in the life of the British monarchy. During that period, cultural and commercial events, along with developments in global and mobile communication technologies, have increased people's access to the Royal Family and, for many, increased its relevance as well. These events range from the decisions to open to tourists both Buckingham Palace and the HMY *Britannia* to renovations of several key palaces and even to the choice of London as the site for the 2012 Summer Olympics.

In the remainder of this book, we demonstrate how aspects of the RFBC, and the dimensions of the five brand components that compose it, shape consumer experiences and producer offerings in realms such as collecting, commemorating, and mediated and touristic experiences. We discuss how those responsible for orchestrating these activities weave many (sometimes all) of these facets into their offerings. We do not limit our discussion to these five brand components, or to the key aspects associated with each, but unpack other relevant aspects of royal consumption and production as specific contexts require. In so doing, we affirm our assertion that the RFBC offers consumers and other stakeholders potent, prolific opportunities and outlets through which to experience consumer culture. It is this combination of compelling brand facets that makes the RFBC unique, intriguing, enticing, and even addictive for many around the globe.