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Media Portrayal of the British Royal Family between 2020 and 2025

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ANNOTATION

This thesis examines the media portrayal of the British royal family between 2020 and 2025, with a particular focus on tabloid journalism and its influence on public perception. The theoretical part explores the historical relationship between the monarchy and the media, the key members of the royal family, and the evolution of the British press. The practical analysis investigates how selected tabloids depict figures such as King Charles III, Prince William, Prince Harry, and their families, highlighting recurring themes, language strategies, and framing techniques. By analyzing media coverage, this study aims to provide insight into the role of the press in shaping the royal family's public image in contemporary society.

KEYWORDS

Media Portrayal, Tabloids, King Charles III, Prince William and Catherine, Prince Harry and Meghan, Elizabeth II

NÁZEV

Mediální obraz královské rodiny v letech 2020-2025

ANOTACE

Tato bakalářská práce zkoumá mediální obraz britské královské rodiny v letech 2020–2025 se zaměřením na bulvární žurnalistiku a její vliv na veřejné vnímání. Teoretická část se věnuje historickému vztahu monarchie a médií, klíčovým členům královské rodiny a vývoji britského tisku. Praktická analýza zkoumá, jak vybrané bulvární deníky zobrazují osobnosti, jako jsou král Karel III., princ William, princ Harry a jejich rodiny. Zaměřuje se na opakující se motivy, jazykové strategie a způsoby znázornění členů královské rodiny. Prostřednictvím analýzy mediálního pokrytí si tato studie klade za cíl poskytnout vhled do role tisku při utváření veřejného obrazu královské rodiny v současné společnosti.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Mediální obraz, bulvární tisk, král Karel III., princ William a Catherine, princ Harry a Meghan, Alžběta II.

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Introduction

The British royal family has long been a subject of intense media scrutiny, with its portrayal evolving alongside changes in journalism and public sentiment. From traditional print media to the digital age, the monarchy's relationship with the press has been characterized by a dynamic interplay of admiration, controversy, and strategic image management. In particular, the tabloid press plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions of the royal family, often employing sensationalism, emotive language, and selective framing to construct narratives that resonate with audiences. This thesis explores the media portrayal of the British royal family between 2020 and 2025, focusing on how tabloid journalism influences the public image of key royal figures.

The primary aim of this study is to analyze how the British press, specifically the tabloids *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Star*, and *Daily Express*, depict leading members of the royal family and what recurring themes, linguistic strategies, and framing techniques are employed. By examining media coverage of figures such as King Charles III, Prince William, Catherine, Princess of Wales, Prince Harry, and Meghan Markle, the research seeks to identify patterns in representation and their broader implications for the monarchy's role in contemporary society. Special attention is given to major events within the examined period, including the death of Queen Elizabeth II, the ascension of King Charles III, the continued fallout from Prince Harry and Meghan's departure from royal duties, and Catherine's recent health concerns, all of which have shaped media narratives surrounding the royal family.

The theoretical part of the thesis provides an overview of the historical relationship between the British monarchy and the media, tracing key moments that have defined this interaction. It also explores the development of the British press, with a focus on the rise of tabloid journalism and the techniques it employs to engage readers. These contextual insights serve as a foundation for understanding the ways in which modern tabloids construct narratives around the royal family.

The practical part consists of an analysis of selected tabloid articles, assessing how different members of the royal family are portrayed and how these representations contribute to broader public discourse. This section also examines editorial biases, language choices, headline construction, and the use of visual elements to shape perceptions of the monarchy. By analyzing these mechanisms, the study provides insight into the extent to which media coverage influences the public's understanding of the royal family.

1 The evolution of the relationship between Royal Family and media

The British Royal Family has always been under the public scrutiny, with its every move monitored by the audience. However, the nature of this scrutiny has evolved over time, particularly in the ways the media has engaged with the monarchy and the extent to which the Royal Family has allowed itself to be exposed. Historically, the monarchy's image was often confined to more controlled forms of media, such as being featured on banknotes and postage stamps, symbols of royal authority that were carefully curated. As society progressed, so too did the media's involvement in shaping the public's perception of the Royal Family. Over the years, the monarchy adapted its approach, moving from traditional print media to the emergence of radio, television, and, more recently, social media, constantly negotiating the balance between maintaining an air of dignity and modernizing its public image. Regardless of the medium, whether it be ink on a stamp or a live broadcast on television, the Royal Family has consistently sought to sway public opinion in its favor, shaping its image to ensure both relevance and respect in the ever-changing media landscape. This chapter explores how the monarchy has engaged with various forms of media over time, and how these media interactions have shaped the public's understanding of the Royal Family.

The collaboration between the British Royal Family and the media can be traced back to the Victorian era. According to Owens, Prince Albert, consort of Queen Victoria, recognized the potential of media to bolster the monarchy's public image. In 1832, the expansion of suffrage granted a significant portion of the middle class the right to vote, which in turn enhanced their political influence. In an effort to align with this emerging bourgeoisie class and secure their loyalty, the Royal Family sought to project a moral image, setting a public example of virtue and propriety.¹ Owens further suggests that this endeavor was facilitated by the boom in the national newspaper industry during the 1880s and 1890s, allowing the monarchy to use the media as a tool for promoting national identity.² However, as the media landscape evolved, particularly toward the end of the Victorian and Edwardian eras, newspapers began to shift their focus. O'Donnell argues that the monarchy's representation in the media gradually moved away from promoting national identity and moral values, giving way to greater personal coverage of royal figures.³ This shift was exemplified by King Edward VII, who, as Glencross observes, understood the importance of royal visibility at social events for cultivating a favorable public

¹ Edward Owens, *Family Firm: Monarchy, Mass Media and the British Public, 1932-53* (University of London Press, 2019), 8.

² Owens, *The Family Firm*, 9.

³ Hugh O'Donnell and Neil Blain, *Media, Monarchy and Power*, (Cromwell Press, 2004), 160.

image.⁴ The necessity of public appearances by royals to maintain a positive image remains evident even today. The media's influence on the Royal Family became even more pronounced during the reign of King George V, marking a pivotal moment in the monarchy's engagement with modern media, particularly radio. Owens notes that George V's use of radio for his 1932 Christmas broadcast was a groundbreaking move that garnered significant public admiration, enhancing his relationship with the people.⁵ In 1934, George V took further steps by appointing Cosmo Lang, the Archbishop of Canterbury, as the royal speechwriter. Lang's more emotive and personal style of communication resonated with the public, drawing greater interest in the lives of the royal family. Owens also highlights the role of George V's son, George, and his wife Marina, who were pioneers in stepping outside the traditional royal role. Their participation in recorded interviews and public displays of affection, such as waving to crowds and kissing on camera, was unprecedented for their time and marked a significant departure from royal convention.⁶ Moreover, in 1934, with the assistance of the Church and BBC radio, George and Marina's wedding became the first royal wedding in British history to be broadcast, further connecting the monarchy with the public and revealing more of their personal lives.

The true evolution of the relationship between the monarchy and the media continued during the reign of George V's sons, Edward VIII and George VI. While George VI was often compared unfavorably to his more charismatic brother, Edward VIII, his ascension to the throne following Edward's abdication provided him with an opportunity to reshape his public image and redefine the monarchy's relationship with the media. Glencross emphasizes the stark contrast between the two brothers: Edward VIII was frequently portrayed as charming and approachable, often using his public appearances to cultivate a more relatable and modern image of the monarchy. In contrast, George VI was perceived as more formal and reserved, which did not resonate as strongly with the public at first.⁷ The new king's coronation, however, became a defining moment for his image. The decision by royal and religious officials to allow the filming and broadcasting of the ceremony was revolutionary for its time, facilitated by the BBC. Owens highlights that the coronation symbolized a significant turning point in how the monarchy engaged with the public. It marked the first time the British monarchy directly used mass media to connect with a broader audience, and the media strategy focused on inclusivity,

⁴ Matthew Glencross, "The image of a modern monarchy, past and present," *History & Policy, Opinion article*, (January 2012).

⁵ Owens, *The Family Firm*, 91.

⁶ Owens, *The Family Firm*, 47.

⁷ Glencross, "The image."

emphasizing the relationship between the crown and the people.⁸ Special efforts were made to ensure that the public could access this momentous event, including appointing an "observer" to describe the ceremony to radio listeners. The broadcast was carefully controlled, with certain religious rites excluded from public view to maintain their sacred status. Nonetheless, this event set a precedent for future royal engagements with the media, marking an important shift in the role that media played in shaping the monarchy's public image. The impact of this media strategy was felt immediately, as it allowed the monarchy to appear more accessible and directly engaged with the populace, laying the groundwork for future royal media relations.

Another pivotal moment in the evolution of the monarchy's relationship with the media came during the coronation of Elizabeth II. This event represented a substantial shift in how the monarchy interacted with the public, as it became the first British royal coronation to be broadcast live on television. According to many scholars, the idea of televising the ceremony initially faced strong resistance from both the royal family and church officials. They were concerned that televising the ceremony would demystify the religious and ceremonial aspects of the coronation, potentially undermining its sanctity. However, after much negotiation, the royal household agreed to the broadcast, though with certain conditions. For instance, as Clancy describes, the royal family insisted that the religiously significant parts of the ceremony, such as the anointing and communion, be omitted from the televised coverage.⁹ Instead, symbolic footage of the cathedral was shown during these moments, providing a balance between the ceremony's sacred nature and the desire for public visibility. Despite these restrictions, the broadcast was a resounding success, both for the monarchy and for television as an emerging medium. Owens observes that the live broadcast played a significant role in fostering a sense of inclusivity among the public. It allowed people across Britain and the Commonwealth to feel a personal connection to the monarchy, as they could watch the coronation unfold in real-time from the comfort of their homes.¹⁰ This shift also helped make the monarchy seem less distant and more engaged with the everyday lives of its citizens. Watson further highlights the importance of the international reach of the broadcast, which cemented the monarchy's global image, turning the coronation into a worldwide event and demonstrating the power of television as a tool for mass communication.¹¹

⁸ Owens, *The Family Firm*, 157-158.

⁹ Laura Clancy, *Running the Family Firm: How the Royal Family Manages Its Image and Our Money* (Manchester University Press, 2021), 68.

¹⁰ Owens, *The Family Firm*, 371.

¹¹ Gavin Watson, "MEDIA AND MAJESTY: TRADITION AND TELEVISION IN THE CORONATION OF ELIZABETH II," *Brock University* 8 (April 2023): 230-231.

The royal family's increasing engagement with the media continued in the late 1960s with the production of a documentary that sought to humanize the monarchy and bring it closer to the public. As Clancy points out, the documentary, which followed the royal family throughout 1968, was an attempt to modernize their image and provide a behind-the-scenes look at their daily lives.¹² However, as Meares notes, the final product was met with mixed reactions. Rather than portraying the family in a more humanized and approachable light, the documentary ended up presenting them as still distant and formal, which some critics felt undermined the intention to make them more relatable.¹³ Nevertheless, the documentary marked a significant turning point in how the monarchy interacted with the media. It was a bold step towards breaking down the traditional barriers between the royal family and the public. This openness, although somewhat limited in its scope, paved the way for future royal media projects and helped normalize the idea of the royal family participating in media production..

The advent of social media in the 21st century brought yet another transformative shift in the monarchy's relationship with the media and the public. According to Maklyuk et al., the first official social media accounts for members of the royal family were launched in 2010, marking the beginning of the monarchy's digital presence. These accounts, however, differ from personal social media profiles in that they are corporate channels used to disseminate information with a neutral tone.¹⁴ While these platforms allow the royal family to maintain more control over the narrative surrounding them, they also blur the traditional hierarchical boundaries between the monarchy and the public. As Clancy observes, this phenomenon, which she refers to as the "collapse of context," has created a sense of intimacy between the royals and the public, diminishing the perceived distance between the two groups.¹⁵ Social media has allowed the monarchy to reach younger generations in ways that traditional media could not, providing a direct line of communication to millions of people. This shift became particularly evident during high-profile events such as the weddings of Prince William and Kate, and later Prince Harry and Meghan. These events were not only covered extensively in the press but were also promoted and celebrated through social media platforms, allowing people from around the world to engage in real-time. Clancy notes that these weddings marked the first large-scale royal events staged in the digital age, where social media engagement was encouraged to foster

¹² Clancy, *Running the Family Firm*, 75.

¹³ Hadley Meares, "The 1969 Documentary That Tried to Humanize Queen Elizabeth II and the Royal Family," *HISTORY*, November 15, 2019.

¹⁴ O. Maklyuk, V. Volkova, and A. Manuylova, "THE ROYAL FAMILY IMAGE IN THE BRITISH MEDIA," *Zaporizhzhia Historical Review* 3, no. 55 (January 1, 2020): 200.

¹⁵ Clancy, *Running the Family Firm*, 168.

stronger relationships with younger audiences and give them a more active role in the royal celebrations.¹⁶ The increased use of social media during these events demonstrated the monarchy's adaptation to the digital age and its continued efforts to maintain relevance in a rapidly changing media landscape.

In conclusion, the relationship between the British Royal Family and the media has evolved significantly over the past two centuries, reflecting broader shifts in society, technology, and public expectations. From the Victorian era, where the Royal Family first recognized the potential of the press to shape public perception, to the more modern era, where radio, television, and social media have become integral to the monarchy's communication strategy, the family has continuously adapted to maintain its relevance and public image. Early collaborations with the media, such as Prince Albert's strategic use of newspapers and George V's groundbreaking radio broadcasts, laid the foundation for the monarchy's relationship with the press. The pivotal moments of Elizabeth II's televised coronation and the 1968 documentary further modernized the monarchy's image, helping bridge the gap between the Royal Family and the public. Moreover, the advent of social media in the 21st century has created new opportunities for the monarchy to engage directly with the public, especially younger generations. Through these various media forms, the Royal Family has not only maintained its influence but has also demonstrated its adaptability in an increasingly digital and interconnected world. The evolution of this relationship highlights the monarchy's efforts to balance tradition with modernity, ensuring that its image remains both relevant and relatable in the ever-changing media landscape.

¹⁶ Clancy, *Running the Family Firm*, 87.

2 Key Members of the British Royal Family

This chapter briefly introduces the members of the British royal family analyzed in the practical part of this thesis, providing an overview of their backgrounds, significant life events, and their relevance to the media portrayals examined. Where applicable, notable events reflected in the practical analysis are highlighted to establish context and underscore the connection between the individuals' public roles and their representation in the media.

King Charles III, formerly known as the Prince of Wales, is the eldest son of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip. Born on November 14, 1948, Charles has been a prominent public figure throughout his life. In the 1970s, he served in the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy, demonstrating his dedication to public service from an early age. Charles married Diana, Princess of Wales, in 1981, and the couple had two sons, William and Harry. Following a widely publicized and turbulent marriage, Charles and Diana divorced in August 1996. In 2005, Charles remarried Camilla Parker Bowles, a union that initially drew significant media attention. According to official royal website, Charles has been involved in numerous charitable organizations throughout his life, particularly those focusing on environmental issues such as climate change, deforestation, and ocean pollution.¹⁷ His commitment to these causes has shaped his public persona as a forward-thinking and compassionate leader. Charles ascended to the throne following the death of his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, on September 8, 2022. This significant event, alongside his recent diagnosis and treatment for cancer, is explored in detail in the practical part of this thesis.

William, the Prince of Wales, is the eldest son of King Charles III and the late Princess Diana, positioning him as the first heir to the throne. Born on June 21, 1982, William's early education included attending Eton College, followed by further studies at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, where he met his future wife, Catherine Middleton. The couple married on April 29, 2011, and now have three children: George, Charlotte, and Louis. William's professional background includes seven and a half years of active military service, which further solidified his reputation as a dedicated and dutiful member of the royal family. Official royal website states that today, William is actively involved in charitable endeavors, particularly those centered on environmental conservation and mental health.¹⁸ His public and official duties both in the United Kingdom and abroad have reinforced his image as a committed and reliable

¹⁷ "The King," Members of the Royal Family, Royal.uk, <https://www.royal.uk/the-king>.

¹⁸ "The Prince of Wales," Members of the Royal Family, Royal.uk, <https://www.royal.uk/the-prince-of-wales>.

figure within the monarchy. Following the death of Queen Elizabeth II, William and Catherine received their current titles as the Prince and Princess of Wales.

Catherine, Princess of Wales, was born Catherine Elizabeth Middleton on January 9, 1982, in Reading. Unlike many members of the royal family, Catherine does not have aristocratic roots, a fact that has contributed to her perception as a relatable and grounded public figure. Like William, she studied at the University of St. Andrews, graduating in 2005 with a degree in History of Art. As a senior member of the royal family, Catherine undertakes numerous royal duties, representing the Crown at official events and supporting various charities. The official royal website mentions that her particular focus lies in early childhood development, children's mental health, and overall well-being, which has shaped her public role as a dedicated advocate for family welfare.¹⁹ During the period examined, Catherine faced a cancer diagnosis and underwent successful treatment, a personal challenge that received significant media attention and is further analyzed in the practical part of this thesis.

Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, and his wife, Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, have become highly influential yet polarizing figures within the royal family. Despite their decision to step back from official duties and relinquish their titles in January 2020, their ongoing connection to the monarchy continues to impact public perception, thus it is essential to include them in this thesis. Born on September 15, 1984, Prince Harry is the younger son of King Charles III and Princess Diana. According to his official website, he served ten years in the British Armed Forces, including two tours in Afghanistan, and later established the Invictus Games Foundation for wounded veterans.²⁰ Harry and Meghan met in 2016 and married in 2018. Following their departure from royal duties, the couple relocated to California, where they focus on various projects, including the Archewell Foundation, the documentary series *Harry & Meghan*, and Harry's memoir, *Spare*.

Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, was born in Southern California and pursued a degree in theater and international relations. Prior to her marriage, she was best known for her acting career, particularly her role in the TV series *Suits*. Outside of acting, Meghan also managed a lifestyle website, *The Tig*, and has been vocal about issues related to feminism, human rights, and social justice. Since stepping away from royal duties, she has continued to engage in media and advocacy projects, including her podcast *Archetypes* and the Netflix show *With Love*,

¹⁹ "The Princess of Wales," Members of the Royal Family, Royal.uk, <https://www.royal.uk/the-princess-of-wales>.

²⁰ "Prince Harry, the Duke of Sussex," The office of Prince Harry & Meghan, <https://sussex.com/prince-harry-the-duke-of-sussex/>.

Meghan. The couple's efforts to control their public narrative while remaining prominent public figures have resulted in intense media scrutiny, further explored in the practical analysis.

Queen Elizabeth II, born on April 21, 1926, to King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, acceded to the throne at the age of 25. Her reign, the longest in British history, was marked by a steadfast commitment to her role as sovereign, characterized by a strong sense of duty and dedication to public service. As a symbol of stability and continuity, she navigated the monarchy through times of crisis and change, maintaining a connection to both the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth. Elizabeth married Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, with whom she had four children. Her passing on September 8, 2022, marked the end of an era, prompting extensive media reflection on her legacy and the future of the monarchy. This historic event and its influence on the public perception of the royal family are examined in detail in the practical part of this thesis.

By exploring the backgrounds and public roles of these key members, this chapter aims to provide a comprehensive foundation for understanding their media portrayals and the complexities of their relationships with the public. The subsequent practical analysis builds upon this contextual framework, offering a deeper examination of how the media influences and constructs the public image of the British royal family.

3 The Evolution of the British Press

This chapter explores the evolution of British press throughout the history with particular focus on the attention-grabbing strategies used by newspaper agencies in relation to the Royal Family. The term "tabloid," once associated with the size of newspapers, now refers to a type of journalism characterized by sensational content such as gossip, scandal, and crime, aimed at captivating audiences with dramatic headlines and attention-grabbing visuals. By providing a historical overview of the British press, the chapter examines the rise of tabloidization in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the dominance of papers like *The Daily Mail* and *The Sun*, and the impact of political affiliations on their coverage. Additionally, it considers the role of language in constructing royal imagery, with tabloids using colloquial expressions and direct engagement to create a sense of connection with readers. Through this exploration, the chapter sets the foundation for understanding how tabloid press continues to influence the public's perception of the royal family today.

Since this thesis examines the media portrayal of the British royal family in tabloid press, it is crucial to begin by defining what constitutes a tabloid. Historically, the term 'tabloid' referred to the compact size of newspapers rather than the content it featured. However, this distinction has become less relevant today, as even more serious papers have adopted the compact format. According to Conboy, the term 'tabloid press' now refers to a category of non-serious journalism characterized by a focus on sensationalized topics such as gossip, sport, sex, and crime.²¹ Xiangyi He states that tabloids are designed to capture their audience through dramatic headlines, large, emotion-arousing pictures, and colorful page layouts that emphasize the most attention-grabbing elements.²² This particular approach to journalism plays a significant role in shaping public perception, especially of high-profile subjects like the British royal family.

In order to understand the current dynamics and trends of the British press, a brief historical overview is essential. For the purpose of this thesis, the focus begins in the late 19th century – a period that marked the introduction of tabloidization and the emergence of tabloid newspapers in Britain. As Conboy states, by this time, a concept of 'news culture' was already established among the British population, and the number of regular readers of both daily and Sunday newspapers was on the rise.²³ Temple further calls these years the 'era of the press

²¹ Martin Conboy, *Tabloid Britain: Constructing a Community Through Language*, (Routledge, 2006), 12.

²² Xiangyi He, "British digital tabloids in the twenty-first century: Continuity or transformation?" (PhD diss., The University of Sheffield, 2023), 29.

²³ Martin Conboy, *Journalism: A Critical History* (SAGE Publications, 2004), 42-43.

barons,' which refers to the leading market position and influence of Lord Northcliffe, Lord Rothermere, and Lord Beaverbrook, who at the time controlled the vast majority of circulating newspapers. In 1896, Lord Northcliffe, following the example of American dailies, founded the *Daily Mail* and changed British journalism beyond recognition.²⁴ Temple characterized this shift, often referred to as tabloidization, as a shift in content towards 'popular journalism', which emphasized human-interested stories and visually accessible layout.²⁵ In 1904, the *Daily Mirror* entered the scene, further strengthening this transformation and reinforcing the trend towards more sensationalized content. The success of these dailies marked the beginning of a new era in British newspaper history as more publications adopted this tabloid format.

The newfound popularity of newspapers was, however, only temporary. According to Wilson, the emergence of radio in the early 20th century posed a direct challenge to the print industry.²⁶ With its faster and more accurate news, radio quickly overshadowed the newspapers. Temple adds that the advent of television further intensified the difficulties for print media, leading to the peak of the sales of newspapers in the middle of the 20th century, after which a steady decline followed.²⁷ Despite these obstacles, in the 1970s, Rupert Murdoch boldly introduced *The Sun* as a direct competitor to the *Daily Mirror*. Roney states that *The Sun* soon outperformed its rivals, became the market leader, and once again changed the long-established market practices.²⁸ Under Murdoch's leadership, the newspaper moved away from traditional political coverage, shortened and simplified its news, and increased emphasis on sex and scandal. Murdoch is, thus, by many scholars, accused of contributing to the 'dumbing down' of the press.

The newspaper industry has faced numerous challenges over the years, but one of the most transformative occurred with the advent of the Internet. As Lefkowitz observes, this shift forced the press to adapt to Internet-driven technologies and platforms.²⁹ It also marked the final phase of tabloidization in the British press, with online platforms introducing new ways to engage audiences, such as interactive content and multimedia. This evolution reflects the press's ongoing acceptance of sensationalism and its adaptation to a rapidly changing media landscape. Ultimately, the shift to digital platforms and the increasing role of social media highlights the press's need to continue adjusting to technological advancements.

²⁴ Temple, *The British Press*, 29.

²⁵ Temple, *The British Press*, 30.

²⁶ Stan Le Roy Wilson, *Mass Media/Mass Culture: An Introduction* (College of the Desert, 1989), 218.

²⁷ Temple, *The British Press*, 58.

²⁸ Dick Rooney, "Dynamics of the British Tabloid Press," *Javnost - the Public* 5, no. 3 (January 1, 1998): 97.

²⁹ Julie Lefkowitz, "'Tabloidization' and the Internet Age." (PhD thesis, University of Oxford, 2021), 218.

To fully understand market development, it is crucial not only to consider historical context but also to examine the current media landscape. While the industry has gradually shifted toward digital platforms, Rooney observes that non-serious newspapers had and still have the largest share among national daily newspapers.³⁰ These observations underscore the resilience of non-serious newspapers, indicating that their ability to attract a wide readership remains strong, even as the media landscape increasingly shifts online. Tobitt reports that, in terms of circulation, *The Sun* holds the leading position, followed by *Daily Mail*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Express*, and *Daily Star*.³¹ The latter three will be analyzed in greater detail in the practical part of this thesis. The current dominance of non-serious newspapers thus underscores the ongoing influence of these media in shaping public opinion and media trends today.

It is also important to acknowledge the political affiliations of newspapers. The ownership of the newspaper plays, and always played, a significant role in shaping their editorial stance. In the past, this stance was heavily influenced by its owners, politicians, and monarchs. When assessing the political leaning of the most prominent dailies today, Pištová states that *The Sun*, *Daily Mail*, and *Daily Express* tend to align with right-wing viewpoints, while *Daily Mirror* generally adopts a left-wing stance and *Daily Star* maintains a more neutral position.³² Additionally, it is commonly considered that right-wing tabloids tend to express support for the monarchy, while left-wing papers often advocate for social democratic values. Otherwise, according to Pištová, there is no formal division between pro-monarchy and anti-monarchy newspapers in the UK.³³ This suggests that, while the monarchy may still be an important issue in shaping political leanings, it does not create a strict divide in the editorial practices of the press.

Should the focus move toward the use of language in tabloids, it becomes evident that it plays a crucial role in shaping readers' opinions. It is one of the key aspects explored in the practical part of this thesis, as it can offer insight into how members of the royal family are perceived in the public eye. Tabloid newspapers aim to create a sense of community and belonging by employing colloquial language to establish this connection. Johansson believes that this is achieved through strategies such as the use of idioms, slang, and dialogic approach,

³⁰ Rooney, "Dynamics of the British Tabloid Press," 96.

³¹ Charlotte Tobitt, "Newspaper ABCs: Sunday Mail in Scotland Manages to Hold off Monthly Decline in October," *Press Gazette*, November 14, 2024.

³² Adéla Pištová, "Britská královská rodina jako předmět britských médií a jejich vliv na veřejné mínění" (Bachelor thesis, Univerzita Hradec Králové, 2024), 26.

³³ Adéla Pištová, "Britská královská rodina jako předmět britských médií a jejich vliv na veřejné mínění" (Bachelor thesis, Univerzita Hradec Králové, 2024), 27.

which fosters the illusion of an interaction between journalist and reader.³⁴ Conboy further adds that colloquialisms like first names, direct commands, and vulgar expressions enhance the sense of shared values and perspectives, and he notes, “The language of the popular tabloid press in Britain is as accurate prediction of the assumed social class and income of its readership at the advertisements and news content.”³⁵ In this way, the language not only captures the readers’ attention but also contributes to the notion that readers and journalists share the same values and attitudes toward public figures like the royal family.

In conclusion, the history and current state of the British tabloid press play a vital role in shaping the public’s perception of the royal family. From its origins in the late 19th century to the rise of digital platforms. Tabloid journalism has evolved, but its emphasis on sensationalism and emotionally charged content remains a defining feature. Through its distinctive use of language and its political alignments, tabloid press continues to exert a powerful influence on the portrayal of the royal family. This thesis further explores the specific mechanisms through which tabloids shape the royal family’s image, providing a deeper understanding of the intersection between media, monarchy, and public opinion in Britain today.

³⁴ Sofia Johansson, *Reading Tabloids: Tabloid Newspaper and Their Readers* (Södertörns högskola, 2007), 97.

³⁵ Martin Conboy, *Tabloid Britain: Constructing a Community Through Language*, (Routledge, 2006), 14.

4 Analysis of Media Portrayal of the Members of Royal Family

The analytical part of this thesis examines the portrayal and public perception of the British royal family in tabloid media, focusing on three widely circulated British tabloids - *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Star*, and *Daily Express* - over the period from January 2020 to January 2025. By analyzing the ways in which these tabloids depict key royal figures, including King Charles III, Prince William, Prince Harry, Catherine, Princess of Wales, Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, and the late Queen Elizabeth II, this study explores the media's role in shaping public narratives. The research adopts an individual-centered approach, evaluating the portrayal of each royal while acknowledging the interconnected nature of their lives and public affairs.

Given the significant influence of tabloid media on public opinion, this analysis considers not only the explicit narratives presented in articles but also the underlying strategies employed to shape these perceptions. The examined tabloids cater to diverse readerships, each with its own editorial stance and approach to reporting on the monarchy. While some outlets focus on admiration and respect for tradition, others employ a more critical or sensationalist tone, often amplifying controversies and personal conflicts within the royal family. This study, therefore, explores both the continuity and divergence in media portrayals, providing a nuanced understanding of how the press constructs and reinforces public attitudes toward the monarchy.

The study investigates both positive and negative representations, taking into account the use of language, headlines, imagery, and broader storytelling strategies that influence public opinion. A particular focus is placed on recurring themes such as duty, family dynamics, resilience, and scandal. By understanding these portrayals, this research provides insight into the ways in which media outlets reinforce or challenge traditional royal narratives. Furthermore, the analysis sheds light on the shifting role of the monarchy in contemporary Britain and how media portrayals reflect evolving public attitudes toward the royal family.

The following part examines the media portrayal of King Charles III across various tabloids, analyzing how different aspects of his personal and public life contribute to the formation of a predominantly positive public image. By exploring the media's depiction of his leadership during national crises, his personal health struggles, his family relationships, and the public reactions to his coronation, this chapter seeks to understand how the press constructs and reinforces his image as a compassionate, resilient, and relatable monarch. Through the use of specific labels and narratives, the media plays a crucial role in shaping the British public's perception of the King, ultimately framing him as a figure of stability, empathy, and dedication.

King Charles III is consistently depicted in a positive light across the examined tabloids, with his positive image being notably interwoven throughout the articles. The media positively refers to him as “forgiving,” “compassioned” or “caring.” This portrayal emphasizes his empathetic qualities, especially in times of national or personal crisis. For instance, during the cost-of-living crisis in Britain, the *Daily Mirror* highlighted the King's Christmas speech, noting that he acknowledged the challenges faced by millions: “The King yesterday used his Christmas speech to acknowledge the struggle facing millions in the cost of living crisis.”³⁶ Such statements portray Charles as a monarch attuned to the concerns of his people. Beyond his leadership during national crises, his personal challenges, such as health issues, also paradoxically contribute to his positive public image. The *Daily Express* illustrated his resilience, quoting: “Despite having treatment, which has impacted his sense of smell, the King is said to have ‘insisted’ on ‘playing a full part’ in the commemoration,” thereby portraying him as a determined and capable figure who continues to perform his royal duties despite personal hardships.³⁷

In addition to his personal resilience, King Charles’s recent health diagnosis, particularly his battle with cancer, has further amplified his image as a relatable and compassionate figure. The *Daily Express* highlighted how his diagnosis has made him more approachable, with the paper noting that the news “makes him more relatable to common people” (see Figure 1). Similarly, the *Daily Mirror* commended his decision to disclose his health condition, emphasizing that “Doctors hailed his decision to share the news, hoping it would encourage others with signs to seek early treatment for the killer disease.”³⁸ These portrayals not only present Charles as resilient but also as a role model, whose personal experiences may have a positive influence on public health awareness.

A key element in shaping the public perception of King Charles is his family life, which serves to humanize him and strengthen his connection to the people. As will be discussed further in this thesis, family ties are crucial in royal public relations, often used to present the members as more down-to-earth. His close relationship with his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, is frequently highlighted in the media to reinforce this image. For example, the *Daily Mirror* published an article titled “Always close to mama,” in which it described how Charles spoke movingly about his “beloved mother” in his first broadcast as King, just a day after her passing.³⁹ The colloquial

³⁶ Russell Myers, “Compassion of Charles,” *Daily Mirror*, December 26, 2022, 2.

³⁷ Emily Ferguson, “King’s fighting spirit! He will lead D-Day tributes,” *Daily Express*, May 18, 2024, 4.

³⁸ Russell Myers, “King’s cancer shock,” *Daily Mirror*, February 6, 2024, 1.

³⁹ Russell Myers, “Always close to Mama,” *Daily Mirror*, December 24, 2022, 1.

use of the word “mama” here serves to create a more intimate tone, appealing to the emotions of the readership. Other articles emphasize Charles’s role as a stabilizing figure, as the media also notes his desire to reunite the royal family following controversies involving other members. The *Daily Mirror* reports that “Source said the King wants to ‘bring his family together’ in the coming months after the Prince Andrew and Harry and Meghan crises,” reinforcing the narrative of Charles as a family-oriented and stabilizing figure within the monarchy.

In discussions of King Charles’s family life, it is also important to consider the role of his current wife, Camilla. Although media coverage of Camilla has been limited, the *Daily Mirror* has increasingly depicted her in a positive light. Historically, Camilla was seen by many as the woman who “stole the heart of a Prince and broke the heart of the People’s Princess,” as *Daily Mirror* states, leading to considerable public disapproval of their marriage.⁴⁰ However, more recently, the media has praised her efforts, noting that “She has stepped out of Charles’s shadow, taking on an unprecedented number of engagements and shining as a beacon of stability as other royals have taken time off.”⁴¹ Additionally, the *Daily Mirror* describes her as having “the sunniest of temperaments,” further contributing to her positive image.⁴² This shift in public perception suggests that Camilla has transformed from being one of the most criticized women in Britain to earning widespread respect and admiration.

Although Charles is usually praised, the coronation of King has generated mixed reactions in the media, highlighting the divide in public opinion. Some outlets, such as the *Daily Star*, criticized the ceremony as excessively costly, particularly in light of the ongoing financial crisis. The *Daily Star* emphasized the expense of the coronation, with the headline “£72 million for a man in a hat to sit in a chair,” which downplays the significance of the event and mocks Charles.⁴³ Another article concerning the coronation used a casual tone, with phrases like “King Charles appears to wince as a royalist grips him by his sausage fingers ahead of the Coronation,” to foster a sense of relatability with readers.⁴⁴ In contrast, the *Daily Express* presented a more favorable portrayal, reporting that “King Charles had requested a slimmed down coronation in tune with the cost-of-living crisis.”⁴⁵ This depiction of Charles as a pragmatic figure striving for a more modest ceremony enhances his public image. However, it is just a question whether

⁴⁰ Emmeline Saunders, “Who is the real Queen Camilla?” *Daily Mirror*, May 6, 2023, 8.

⁴¹ Matt Roper, “In Camilla we trust,” *Daily Mirror*, February 6, 2024, 6.

⁴² Jennie Bond, “Her positivity will help his recovery,” *Daily Mirror*, February 6, 2024, 7.

⁴³ Will Stone, “£72 million for a man in a hat to sit in a chair,” *Daily Star*, December 23, 2024, 1.

⁴⁴ Meg Jorsh, “Mind the fingers!” *Daily Star*, May 6, 2023, 4.

⁴⁵ Richard Palmer, “King demands coronation to reflect costs crisis,” *Daily Express*, October 12, 2022, 1.

it truly was Charles who requested lower costs. The contrasting coverage from these newspapers illustrates the powerful role that media plays in shaping public opinion, as different outlets create diverse images of the same event.

Despite these divergent views, both sides devoted significant attention to the coronation, underscoring its importance to the British public. The coverage of the event was extensive, with newspapers dedicating entire editions to the ceremony and its preparations. The *Daily Express* referred to the coronation as “the day of destiny” and “the magnificent spectacle,” emphasizing its monumental nature.⁴⁶ The *Daily Express* also praised the event with a comment “That uplifting collective solidarity demonstrates how well our constitutional monarchy works, especially in the hands of a figure as thoughtful and dedicated as King Charles, whose entire life has been a preparation for the role.”⁴⁷ This extensive media coverage, which painted the coronation in a positive light, served to further solidify King Charles’s position as a thoughtful and dedicated leader.

In conclusion, the portrayal of King Charles III in the examined tabloids reflects a carefully crafted image that emphasizes his positive qualities as a monarch. His responses to national and personal challenges, as well as his strong family ties, are repeatedly highlighted as evidence of his empathy, resilience, and commitment to the monarchy. Furthermore, the media's coverage of his coronation, despite divergent opinions, underscores the significant role of the media in influencing public perceptions. Whether emphasizing his personal struggles or his leadership during crises, the tabloids collectively contribute to an image of King Charles as a monarch who embodies stability, compassion, and dedication. Through such depictions, the media not only informs public opinion but also shapes the cultural narrative surrounding the British monarchy in the post-Elizabethan era.

Building upon this portrayal of the current monarch, the next section turns to Prince William, exploring how the media has shaped his image as the future king. While King Charles' reign is in its early stages, William’s public persona as the royal heir is already being carefully crafted, influenced by both his personal life and his royal duties. The following section explores the complex portrayal of Prince William in the media, looking at how his public image, relationships with family, and personal life influence how he is perceived as the future king. It

⁴⁶ Leo McKinstry, “The Crown is central to our British identity,” *Daily Express*, May 6, 2023, 2.

⁴⁷ McKinstry, “The Crown is central,” 2.

also examines how the media navigates the delicate balance between the man and the monarch, shaping the public's expectations for the royal heir.

As the heir to the British throne, Prince William remains a prominent figure in the public eye, performing his royal duties with a sense of dignity and responsibility. His visibility in the public sphere is consistent, as he frequently participates in various public events and other royal ceremonies. Unlike many public figures who may seek to distance themselves from the media, William seems to embrace his role with openness, as evidenced by his frequent appearances. His active presence not only affirms his commitment to royal duties but also reinforces his standing as the future monarch.

William's popularity as the future monarch is further reflected in public opinion polls, which consistently show strong support for his succession to the throne. In a survey, published in *Daily Mirror*, he received 47% of the votes, surpassing his father, then-Prince Charles. The article is complemented by a headline with the title "Make William our next king" and further reads "The public want the Crown to bypass the Prince of Wales and be handed to Prince William when the Queen's reign ends, a poll has revealed."⁴⁸ This result indicates that William has earned significant affection from the public, which underscores his ability to connect with people on a personal level. His high standing in such polls, combined with his active public presence, suggests that many view him as a figure who is both capable and well-suited to assume the role of sovereign in the future.

The portrayal of Prince William in the media also often varies depending on the context. Tabloids, for instance, have been observed to refer to him informally as "Will" in more casual situations, a nickname that creates a sense of familiarity and approachability. However, when emphasizing his royal significance, the media tends to use his full name, "William" (as mentioned in the example above). This contrast between the casual and formal forms of address highlights the delicate balance the media strikes in presenting a figure of both familiarity and authority. The use of "Will" may, at times, carry an undertone of mockery, particularly considering his position as heir to the throne. An example of using this nickname to mock William can be seen in the article by *Daily Star*, with the title "My Willy's got diddy sausages" (see Figure 2). This naming strategy underscores the power of tabloids in shaping the public perception of prominent individuals, manipulating how they are viewed by the general population.

⁴⁸ Russell Myers, "Make William our next king," *Daily Mirror*, April 7, 2021, 12-13.

An interesting facet of William's public persona is his tendency to defend both his family and the reputation of the royal family as a whole. He is often portrayed as firm in his convictions, especially when under pressure. For example, when accusations of racism were levied against the Royal Family, William was quick to assert, "We are very much not a racist family," publicly defending the institution's integrity, as printed in *Daily Express*.⁴⁹ His outspoken nature also emerged when he expressed his sorrow over the media's treatment of his late mother, Princess Diana. In one instance, the *Daily Express* used the headline "William Fury" to capture his anger and frustration and further wrote "William, 38, demanded the 1995 programme is never shown again and said the BBC's failings 'not only let my mother down, and my family down; they let the public down too'".⁵⁰ These moments suggest that William, knowingly or unknowingly, has taken on the role of the royal family's public defender. While he often appears steadfast, the media also highlights his sensitive side, particularly when discussing difficult topics. Descriptions of William as "clearly aggrieved" or "incredibly sad" illustrate his emotional investment in the well-being of both his family and the royal institution, offering a nuanced portrayal of a man deeply committed to his heritage.⁵¹

Family life also plays a central role in the narrative surrounding Prince William. He is frequently depicted as a devoted father, spending time with his children and engaging in various family activities. *Daily Express*'s article confirming this, states for example "It's easy to forget this is the future King with his wife and children – they look like any happy family playing together."⁵² Media coverage also often highlights the warmth of his relationship with his wife, Kate, showcasing both their family moments and private dates. *Daily Express* captured such a date by stating "Bringing together old-school glamour with life as thoroughly modern royals, these charming pictures show the tenderness between the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge on a shared mission." in an article titled "Royals' intimate Earth shots".⁵³ These portrayals contribute to the image of William as not only a dedicated parent but also a reliable partner. His ability to balance family life with his royal duties reinforces the notion that he would be a capable future monarch, someone who prioritizes both his personal and public responsibilities. The media's emphasis on his role as a caring father also might carry symbolic weight, suggesting that he would similarly fatherly care for the nation as a whole.

⁴⁹ Richard Palmer, "Haunted by race slur, William strikes back," *Daily Express*, March 12, 2021, 1-2.

⁵⁰ Cyril Dixon, Liz Perkins, "William fury: BBC lies ruined mum's life," *Daily Express*, May 21, 2021, 1-2.

⁵¹ Dixon, Perkins, "William fury," 1-2.

⁵² Richard Palmer, "Kate's cuties are full of family fun," *Daily Express*, April 30, 2021, 2.

⁵³ Mark Reynolds, "Royals' intimate Earth shots," *Daily Express*, October 21, 2021, 3.

The relationship between William and his father, King Charles, also reflects a positive and supportive dynamic. Reports often highlight the close bond they share, such as a photograph featured in *Daily Express* showing them together on Father's Day, accompanied by a caption "Heir's to you dad - Wills' show of love for Charles".⁵⁴ This public display of affection and admiration further strengthens William's image as someone who values family ties and respects his lineage. Innocent pun also draws an attention and simply points out William's title. In interviews, William has spoken openly about his pride in both his father and his wife, noting the challenges they have faced together. Such statements underscore the strong familial connections that contribute to William's well-rounded public persona.

In contrast to his relationship with his father, William's relationship with his brother, Prince Harry, has become notably more strained in recent years. After Harry and his wife, Meghan Markle, stepped back from their royal duties, the brothers' interactions have been described as distant. While they still attend official events together, the atmosphere between them is often characterized as formal rather than warm, with headlines such as *The Daily Mirror's* "Together... yet apart" (see Figure 3) aptly describing their current relationship. *Daily Express* have portrayed the brothers as standing "Shoulder to shoulder... for the sake of Diana" during the unveiling of a statue in honor of their late mother.⁵⁵ This chilly dynamic, however, did not emerge in a vacuum. The public's awareness of their growing distance is compounded by the fact that Harry's departure from royal duties was not communicated to the family in advance, leaving the Palace unprepared to handle the subsequent media fallout. This lack of communication likely exacerbated the tension between the brothers, casting a shadow over their once-close relationship.

In conclusion, Prince William's public image is a complex and multifaceted portrayal of a future monarch who is both deeply invested in his family's well-being and dedicated to fulfilling his royal duties. His media representation highlights his role as a defender of the royal family's reputation, a devoted father, and a man with strong family ties. While his relationship with his brother, Prince Harry, remains strained, William's closeness to his father and his commitment to his family creates a portrait of a future king who is both capable and compassionate. The way in which the media shapes and reflects his image will continue to play a significant role in how the public perceives him in the years to come.

⁵⁴ Liz Perkins, "Heir's to you dad," *Daily Express*, June 22, 2020, 1.

⁵⁵ Russell Myers, Giles Sheldrick, "Shoulder to shoulder...for sake of Diana," *Daily Express*, March 12, 2021, 4-5.

Turning to a contrasting chapter in royal media coverage, the focus shifts to Prince Harry following his decision, alongside his wife Meghan, to step back from royal duties in January 2020. While the Sussexes' departure was a joint decision, media coverage predominantly centered on Harry, portraying him as the central figure in the controversy. The chapter examines how *Daily Express*, *Daily Mirror*, and *Daily Star*, framed Harry's actions and the public perception of him in the wake of his decision. Through sensationalized headlines, emotional language, and a focus on Harry's personal motivations, the media constructed a narrative that significantly shaped public opinion. This analysis highlights the complex interplay between media representations of Harry, his relationship with the royal family, and the broader societal discourse surrounding the monarchy.

The monitored period began with a highly controversial decision made by the Sussex family in January 2020, when Harry and Meghan announced their intention to step back from their royal duties. This announcement shocked the public, primarily because it was made without prior consultation with the rest of the royal family. As a result, it came as a complete surprise to both the public and the monarchy. The announcement led to an overwhelming wave of media coverage, with numerous articles attempting to interpret and respond to the decision. For instance, the *Daily Express* reported that "The Queen was left dismayed last night after Harry and Meghan 'stepped back' from senior royal duties."⁵⁶ By expressly mentioning the Queen the *Daily Express* seemed to frame this resignation as a personal attack on Elizabeth II, further intensifying the emotional response of readers. And by portraying Harry and Meghan's actions as an affront to the Queen, the media outlets evoked sympathy for the royal family. This narrative is exemplified in the *Daily Mirror* headline "They didn't even tell the Queen," and in another article titled "Queen to Harry: I want you to stay...but you're free to go," which portrays the worried monarch and refers to her as "the heartbroken Queen" in the text (see Figure 4).⁵⁷ This emotional framing aimed to cultivate a negative public perception of Harry and Meghan, casting them as disloyal and disrespectful.

The Sussexes' departure from royal duties, however, was just the beginning of a series of controversial actions that would further fuel public and media backlash. Following their withdrawal from royal responsibilities, the couple relocated to California, where they engaged in a series of high-profile ventures. They participated in a highly publicized interview with Oprah Winfrey, released a documentary detailing their departure, and Harry published his

⁵⁶ Richard Palmer, "Queen's dismay as Harry and Meghan step back from royal life," *Daily Express*, January 9, 2020, 1.

⁵⁷ Russell Myers, "They didn't even tell the Queen," *Daily Mirror*, January 9, 2020, 1.

memoir, *Spare*. Each of these actions drew significant media attention, often casting the couple in a negative light, either as individuals or in relation to the royal family. Consequently, the public rift between Harry and the royal family deepened, as evidenced by the increasingly strained relations between Harry and his relatives (see in the part dedicated to William). And although the media commonly referred to this period as "Megxit," much of the blame was placed directly on Harry's shoulders, portraying him as the central figure behind the couple's controversial decisions, just as Queen Elizabeth II was taken as a representative of the Royal Family. This is evident in headlines such as *Daily Express*'s "End this now, Harry! For love of the Queen and Prince Philip, war of words must stop,"⁵⁸ or "Harry, do you really hate your family so much?"⁵⁹ which both directly target Harry, placing all the blame on him and amplifying his public's negative perception.

Despite its usual detachment from royal affairs, the *Daily Star* became particularly vocal when discussing the Sussexes, often sensationalizing even the slightest mention of the couple. The newspaper frequently referred to the couple in derogatory terms, such as the "shy couple," employing variations like "Publicity-shy couple" or "His royal shyness" to mock their desire for privacy. The tabloid went even further by censoring their faces in images, symbolizing their retreat from the royal spotlight. This mocking tone extended to harsh and, at times, ludicrous headlines, such as "He must have been dropped on his head as a baby," quoting Meghan Markle's father, Thomas Markle, featuring Harry's censured head turned upside down.⁶⁰ Another article named appealingly "Game of Moans," reads "A publicity-shy couple have trashed the Royal Family in their new documentary," and gives an ideal example of the hyperbolic language, together with pop culture reference used to attract readership.⁶¹ However, the *Daily Star* doesn't stop there and continues with articles such as "FREE It's not my fault mask!" featuring a cutout of Harry's face (see Figure 5) and further stating "Been a bit of a bellend but don't want to take any responsibility? No bother! Just wear this classy cut-out-and-keep face covering and blame everyone else instead." Again, this excerpt is a perfect example of colloquial language, using vulgar terms and slang, which very likely attracts readers who are biased towards Harry. Such extreme and often vulgar commentary contributed to a portrayal of Harry and Meghan as both self-serving and detached from reality, alienating them further from public sympathy.

⁵⁸ Richard Palmer, "End this now, Harry!" *Daily Express*, March 5, 2021, 1.

⁵⁹ Richard Palmer, "Harry, do you really hate your family so much?" *Daily Express*, December 2, 2022, 1.

⁶⁰ Jack Wetherill, "He must have been dropped on his head as a baby," *Daily Star*, November 13, 2021, 1.

⁶¹ Ed Gleave, "Game of moans," *Daily Star*, December 6, 2022, 11.

Notably, the *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Express* also devoted extensive coverage to the couple's departure. These tabloids devoted their entire front pages to the announcement, using bold text and eye-catching photographs to emphasize the drama surrounding the Sussexes' decision. The *Daily Mirror* labeled the announcement as "Royal sensation," a phrase that trivialized the seriousness of the situation, equating the royal family's internal conflict to a mere celebrity spectacle.⁶² This trivialization was further cemented with the headline "Royal Soap Oprah,"⁶³ referencing the couple's interview with Oprah Winfrey, and "Stop this royal circus,"⁶⁴ which ridiculed the entire monarchy. These titles, while sensationalizing the Sussexes' actions, also reflected a shift in how the royal family was perceived in the media — less as an institution of tradition and more as a subject of public spectacle. By framing the royal family as a "circus," the *Daily Mirror* undermined its dignity, reducing it to entertainment for the masses.

In conclusion, the media's treatment of Prince Harry following his decision to step back from royal duties underscores the significant role the press plays in shaping public perception of public figures. Harry, often portrayed as the primary instigator of the Sussexes' departure, became the focal point of media scrutiny, with tabloids framing him as disloyal and responsible for the rift with the royal family. Through sensational headlines and emotionally charged language, the media not only undermined Harry's public image but also contributed to the growing divide between him and the monarchy. This part illustrated how the media, by focusing on Harry's individual actions and motivations, influenced the narrative surrounding his departure, transforming what was once a royal duty into a media spectacle. Ultimately, the media's portrayal of Harry reflects broader patterns of celebrity culture and public judgment, where personal decisions are subject to public dissection and sensationalization.

Beyond Harry's portrayal, the media's influence extends to other members of the royal family, shaping their public identities in distinct ways. A notable example is Catherine, Princess of Wales, whose public image has been carefully crafted and celebrated. As a prominent member of the British Royal Family, Kate is not only recognized for her royal duties but also admired for her compassion, relatability, and personal style. Through her involvement in charitable causes, her role as a devoted mother, and her ability to maintain a sense of normalcy despite her royal status, Kate has cultivated a carefully crafted image that resonates deeply with

⁶² Russell, "They didn't even tell the Queen," 1.

⁶³ Christopher Bucktin, Russell Myers, "Royal soap Oprah," *Daily Mirror*, February 16, 2021, 1.

⁶⁴ Russell Myers, "Stop the royal circus," *Daily Mirror*, December 9, 2022, 1.

the public. This chapter will explore how media portrayals of her family life, resilience in the face of adversity, and fashion choices contribute to her status as both a beloved royal and a contemporary public figure. Additionally, the section discusses how these portrayals reflect broader societal values and expectations, solidifying Kate's place in both royal and popular culture.

Kate Middleton is undeniably one of the most publicly recognized and admired members of the British Royal Family. Her widespread popularity is immediately apparent upon reviewing the tabloid press, where she is consistently portrayed in a highly positive light. Positive descriptions such as "caring," "smiling," and "hugging" frequently accompany her name in the headlines, reflecting her deep involvement in charity work and her genuine connection with ordinary people. These portrayals, an example shown in Figure 6, have helped shape her image, making her not only a royal figure but also someone who feels accessible and grounded. Furthermore, her public persona is solidified by depictions of her engaging in everyday activities, such as cycling, enjoying nature (see Figure 7), or participating in rock climbing—activities that emphasize her relatability and suggest that, despite her royal status, Kate shares common interests and values with the general public.

The only notable misstep attributed to Kate during the period under review occurred prior to the official announcement of her cancer diagnosis. In her official statement, which was widely published across the newspapers, Kate explained that the delay in making her diagnosis public was due to the initial uncertainty surrounding her condition. She also wished to first inform her children before sharing the news with the public. The confusion that followed was not linked to the cancer diagnosis itself, but rather to Kate's absence from public life after undergoing abdominal surgery in January. Her prolonged absence led to speculation about her health, with some suggesting she may have been unwell. These rumors were further fueled by published footage of Kate shopping, which some interpreted as evidence of a doppelganger. The *Daily Star*, the only tabloid to report on this controversy, featured a post from Sonja McLaughan stating, "It's so obviously not Kate. Some newspapers are reporting it as a fact, but it's not her. No conspiracy theorist, but it's all very odd.", whereby they did not express an opinion but definitely attributed the speculations.⁶⁵ The tabloid further exacerbated the situation by printing poorly edited images from Kate's social media, fueling the speculation and, in a derogatory move, referring to her as "Fakey Katie" (see Figure 8, *Daily Star* - Fakey Katie).

⁶⁵ Dominik Lemanski, "Don't believe the Kate 'lies'," *Daily Star*, March 20, 2024, 5.

The choice of such a defamatory nickname was likely a calculated strategy to attract readership. The article was also accompanied by several “humorous” imitations of Kate’s original photo, further mocking her Instagram posts. However, once Kate’s official announcement regarding her cancer was made, the public’s understanding of the circumstances clarified, and the rumors dissipated.

Following the announcement of her diagnosis, Kate received an outpouring of support from both the media and the public, including from tabloids such as *Daily Star*, which are typically known for their tendency to mock public figures. In an unusual move, *Daily Star* opted for a more subdued design for their article, choosing black-and-white tones with red underlining that, while eye-catching, did not undermine the gravity of the situation. Coverage by the *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Express* emphasized her gratitude toward the medical staff who cared for her, with the *Daily Express* citing the Princess’s words: “I wanted to thank you for looking after me so well in the past year.”⁶⁶ The *Daily Mirror* also highlighted a moment when Kate comforted another patient, saying, “You are in the best hands.”⁶⁷ Additionally, the *Daily Express* noted that “cancer made her question what truly mattered in her life,” portraying her as a compassionate and grounded individual who maintains a strong connection to ordinary people.⁶⁸ These portrayals served to further strengthen her image, humanizing her and demonstrating that even someone of her status is not immune to personal hardship.

In an issue of *Daily Star*, which reported on Kate’s cancer diagnosis, the tabloid featured a photograph of the Wales family under the headline “Strong Family,” alongside a quote from Kate praising her husband for being her “rock.”⁶⁹ This shows another significant aspect of Kate’s public image—her family life, which is consistently promoted as a central element of her identity. Tabloids seem to depict the Cambridge family as almost flawless. For instance, *Daily Express* referred to their family photograph with the phrase “Fab family,” praising the family and using colloquial language to establish a connection with its readership.⁷⁰ This casual depiction aligns with the broader narrative that Kate and her family consistently project at public events—one of unity, joy, and ease. Their carefully curated public appearances project an idealized version of family life that resonates with the public, reinforcing traditional values and the notion of a stable, loving family unit. Articles such as *Daily Express*’s “Kate’s Cuties

⁶⁶ Jan Disley, “Kate’s ‘relief’ at being in remission from cancer,” *Daily Express*, January 15, 2025, 2.

⁶⁷ Saskia Rowlands, “You’re in the best hands…” *Daily Mirror*, January 15, 2025, 4.

⁶⁸ Disley, “Kate’s ‘relief,’” 2.

⁶⁹ James Caven, “I’m going to be OK,” *Daily Star*, March 23, 2024, 4.

⁷⁰ Palmer, “Kate’s cuties,” 2.

Are Full of Family Fun” (see Figure 9) underscore Kate’s central role in this dynamic, often portraying her as a devoted mother. Her role as a mother is consistently emphasized, often depicted through images of her holding infants, embracing children, or engaging in activities such as reading to young audiences. This active involvement in family matters serves to humanize her, enhancing her relatability to a broad audience.

The positive portrayal of William and Kate’s marriage further strengthens this image of stability and happiness. Throughout the period under examination, there have been no public hints of marital discord or conflict. On the contrary, the couple is frequently depicted as affectionate and supportive, always seen hand in hand, smiling, and showing mutual encouragement. The couple's support for each other is especially emphasized during challenging times. For instance, when Kate was diagnosed with cancer, the couple’s unity and strength were evident and highlighted in articles such as in *Daily Mirror*’s article with the headline “INSPIRING” reads “William took a leave of absence to care for Kate and their children...”⁷¹ An article from *Daily Express* also depicted a more intimate moment between the couple at the British Academy Film Awards, where Kate playfully patted William’s bottom.⁷² This innocent gesture humanizes the couple, revealing that, despite their royal status, they too enjoy moments of fun and affection. And although such gestures might be seen as contrary to royal protocol, they contribute to making the Cambridge family more relatable and endearing to the public.

Another key dimension of Kate’s public image is her fashion, which attracts significant attention, often surpassing the coverage of other members of the Royal Family. Unlike her counterparts, Kate's wardrobe is frequently scrutinized in the media, with her outfits being discussed not only during major public events like state functions and royal ceremonies but also in more casual settings, such as attending church. The media often highlights her fashion choices, using phrases like “Kate steals the show” (*Daily Express*, Figure 10), “Dazzling Kate,” and “Kate sparks” to describe her style. These catchphrases emphasize the public’s fascination with her appearance, treating her as a celebrity figure rather than a royal family member.⁷³ In fact, *Daily Express* article covering the 2023 British Academy Film even placed Kate alongside celebrities such as Cate Blanchett and Lily James in discussions of celebrity fashion. This blurring of the lines between royalty and celebrity underscores the unique public role Kate

⁷¹ Russell Myers, “Annus horribilis,” *Daily Mirror*, November 8, 2024, 2.

⁷² Liz Perkins, “Kate goes back to the age of black and white...” *Daily Express*, February 20, 2023, 3.

⁷³ Perkins, “Kate goes back to the age of black and white...”, 3.

occupies, where her personal style and public appearances are viewed with the same level of scrutiny and admiration as those of high-profile figures in the entertainment industry.

In conclusion, Kate Middleton's public image has been carefully crafted through her actions, her family life, and her distinctive personal style. Her charitable work, relatable family dynamic, and approachable persona have made her a beloved figure both within the Royal Family and in the broader public. Whether through her public appearances, her fashion choices, or her display of strength and resilience during personal challenges, Kate continues to set an example for others, embodying the values of kindness, stability, and authenticity. Her image as a modern, relatable member of the Royal Family makes her a significant and enduring figure in both royal and popular culture.

In contrast to Kate's largely positive media portrayal, Meghan Markle has been the subject of more polarized and often contentious coverage. While both women hold prominent roles within the monarchy, their representations in the press diverge significantly, reflecting broader narratives about tradition, modernity, and the expectations placed on royal women. Proceeding section examines the portrayal of Meghan Markle in the media, focusing on the period following her and Prince Harry's decision to step back from their roles as senior members of the British royal family. While Meghan's role in the "Megxit" saga has been widely discussed, this part does not focus on the departure itself, as it has already been addressed in relation to Harry. Instead, the focus here will be on the specific portrayals of Meghan in the media, which help to shape public perceptions of her. The section aims to explore how the press has depicted Meghan, analyzing the complexities of her public image, the contrasting narratives surrounding her, and the ways in which her actions and past have been scrutinized. By examining both the positive and negative media portrayals, the section seeks to understand how Meghan has been framed in relation to the royal family, her status as a former actress, and her role in supporting her husband. Through an analysis of key articles and visual representations, this part provides insight into the media's role in shaping public perception of Meghan Markle during this pivotal time in her life and career.

Meghan Markle has not received as much attention in the media as other members of the royal family, particularly when compared to Kate Middleton, who holds a similar position as the wife of a monarch. The portrayal of Meghan in the media is generally ambivalent, fluctuating between positive and negative depictions, with a tendency towards the latter. Unlike her husband, Harry, who is often depicted as the instigator of family conflicts, Meghan's image

is more nuanced. She is not explicitly vilified as the source of all issues within the royal family, but she is also not celebrated. However, several incidents during the period under review contribute to a more negative public perception of Meghan. For instance, *The Daily Star* published an article titled “Mrs Shy is accused of bullying Palace staff,” with a critical tone towards her.⁷⁴ The title itself suggests a mocking stance, alluding to the Sussexes’ desire to maintain privacy while simultaneously drawing attention to their actions. This approach is characteristic of *The Daily Star’s* portrayal of the Sussex family. Similarly, *The Daily Express* furthered the narrative of bullying with a report on a formal complaint filed by Jason Knauf, the communications secretary to both the Cambridges and the Sussexes. Knauf’s statement, “I am very concerned that the Duchess was able to bully two PAs out of the household in the past year,” adds a layer of seriousness to the accusations, potentially fueling negative sentiment among readers.⁷⁵ Another article from *The Daily Star* focused on Meghan Markle, titled “Publicity-shy woman tells 7.67BN people: I’m pregnant.”⁷⁶ The piece continues in a colloquial tone, stating, “A shy woman famous for hastening publicity told the whole world last night: I’m having another nipper. In scenes that could have been straight from a romcom - but weren’t - the ex-actress and her ginger beau chose Valentine’s Day to announce.” The article adopts a critical stance towards Meghan’s announcement, using language that diminishes the significance of the news by framing it in a negative light. The choice of wording and tone implies disapproval of the couple’s public declaration, subtly mocking Meghan’s decision to make such a personal revelation on a widely viewed platform.

In contrast, some media outlets have highlighted moments when Meghan appeared to defend her husband, portraying her as a strong and protective figure. For example, *The Daily Express* reported on Meghan’s public condemnation of the royal family for allegedly spreading falsehoods about her and Harry: “The Queen was left deeply saddened yesterday after the Duchess of Sussex accused the royal family of spreading lies about her and Prince Harry.” The article further follows “The thirty-nine-year-old Duchess defended her decision to star in the TV special by suggesting she could not remain silent while The Firm reports against the couple.”⁷⁷ The article notes her assertion that she could not remain silent in the face of these claims, thus positioning Meghan as a defender of her family. Similarly, *The Daily Mirror* quotes Meghan’s own words, in which she describes her actions as a means of shielding Harry from

⁷⁴ Jerry Lawton, “Woman accused of bullying staff,” *Daily Star*, March 4, 2021, 7.

⁷⁵ Richard Palmer, “‘This will backfire on Harry and Meghan’,” *Daily Express*, March 5, 2021, 2-3.

⁷⁶ Matt Robbins, “Publicity-shy woman tells 7.67BN people: I’m pregnant,” *Daily Star*, February 12, 2021, 1.

⁷⁷ Palmer, “‘This will backfire on Harry and Meghan’,” 2-3.

persistent family criticism (Figure 11). While these portrayals may enhance Meghan's image as a devoted spouse, they can also be interpreted as a source of family discord, contributing to the couple's eventual departure from royal duties.

Another recurring theme in media coverage of Meghan is her background as an actress, which is often used to undermine her credibility and status within the royal family. Unlike Kate Middleton, whose earlier career as an assistant buyer is rarely mentioned in the media, Meghan's past is frequently referenced in a way that appears to mock her. For example, *The Daily Mirror* published an article accusing Meghan of disrupting the harmonious relationship between Prince William, Kate, and Harry, "In an astonishing tirade, the Princess of Wales's uncle accused the American former actress of disrupting the happy trio that was Kate, Prince William and his brother" unnecessarily pointing to Meghan's prior occupation.⁷⁸ Furthermore, *The Daily Express* criticized Meghan for accepting free clothing: "As an actress it was perfectly acceptable to take freebies sent by fashion chains and designer labels. But Meghan had to be told it was not the done thing when you are a member of the royal family."⁷⁹ Such references to Meghan's previous status serve to emphasize her outsider status, implicitly suggesting that she is ill-suited to the royal institution.

Given the limited number of articles solely dedicated to Meghan, much of her public image is also shaped by the photographs that accompany these articles. These images often depict Meghan in a more relaxed, informal manner, which contrasts with the more traditional and formal representations of other royal family members. Many of the photos show Meghan in casual settings, such as selfies either with family members or alone, which further reinforce her image as approachable and down-to-earth (see Figure 11). This more relaxed public persona was highlighted in an article from *The Daily Mirror*, which quoted Meghan's recollection of her first meeting with Prince William and Kate: "Meghan described her first meeting with William and Kate, saying that she was surprised at their 'formality' behind closed doors. Revealing that she was barefoot and wearing ripped jeans at their first meeting, she said: 'I've always been a hugger. I didn't realise that that is really jarring for a lot of Brits.'" ⁸⁰ While Meghan's casual demeanor might allow her to connect with the general public, it also highlights the tension between her personal style and the expectations of the royal family, even after her departure from official duties. Meghan's relatability may resonate with the public, but she must

⁷⁸ Mark Jefferies, "Kate, William and Harry were great together..." *Daily Mirror*, March 6, 2024, 4.

⁷⁹ Mark Reynolds, "Posh frocks funded by Charles," *Daily Express*, March 5, 2021, 3.

⁸⁰ Russell Myers, "Point of no return," *Daily Mirror*, December 9, 2022, 5.

also remain aware that her connection to the royal institution, despite stepping back from formal roles, still carries expectations of decorum and formality.

To conclude, Meghan's media portrayal is shaped by a complex interplay of personal history, public actions, and the contrasting expectations placed upon her as a member of the royal family. While some narratives paint her as a protector of her husband and a relatable figure for the public, other portrayals emphasize her past as an actress and her perceived missteps within the royal family. These varying depictions contribute to a multifaceted image that reflects both admiration and criticism, leaving a significant mark on her public persona.

Unlike Meghan, whose media representation is often polarizing, Queen Elizabeth II has remained a consistently revered figure in the press. Even in the face of evolving public attitudes toward the monarchy, her portrayal in tabloids has largely reflected a sense of continuity, duty, and national identity. The final part examines how the Queen was represented in the media during the examined period, particularly in the context of her passing, which marked a profound moment of transition for the monarchy. While the majority of the articles focus on her long reign and the respect she commanded as a monarch, the Queen's passing in the midst of this period inevitably marks a significant turning point in the media coverage. Given that the Queen died halfway through the timeframe under review, the amount of content dedicated to her death and funeral is relatively limited, yet profoundly impactful. Despite the shortened time frame for analysis, the portrayal of the Queen in these tabloids remains consistently respectful, highlighting her dedication, sense of duty, and the deep admiration she inspired in the British public. This part further explores how the tabloids reflected on her life, legacy, and the nation's collective grief following her passing.

The image of Queen Elizabeth II across the examined tabloids is overwhelmingly positive, with the majority of coverage framed in highly respectful terms. Her name is frequently accompanied by adjectives such as "glorious," "beloved," and "cherished," reflecting a profound reverence for her character and role. This reverence is often expressed through a tone of admiration and gratitude. Especially highlighted is her dutifulness and determination. For instance, a *Daily Express* article titled "Queen: I Won't Let Down My Nation" highlights her sense of duty.⁸¹ The article reads "The Queen is determined to be seen at as many Platinum Jubilee celebrations as possible over fears of letting the country down." Furthermore, her devotion is reinforced by another piece stating, "She was the very personification of duty, never

⁸¹ Richard Palmer, "Queen: I won't let down my nation," *Daily Express*, April 9, 2022, 1.

shirking responsibility, never complaining about her burden, even when she passed the age of 90.” Such portrayals underscore her deep commitment to the nation, which is particularly well received by the public. This suggests that the Queen’s actions are perceived as motivated by a sense of service to the people, thereby reinforcing her image as a devoted sovereign.

The Queen's public persona also aligns with her role as a unifying figure, especially in times of national crisis. Notably, during the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Queen was depicted as a symbol of resilience and responsibility. Her actions were often framed as an example for the nation to follow, demonstrating leadership and solidarity in difficult times. For instance, in the *Daily Express* article titled “Queen Sets ‘Example’ by Calling Off Xmas Party,” it is reported that “The festive lunch will not take place this year as Her Majesty wanted to lead by ‘example’ and act with caution to protect her loved ones.”⁸² This emphasis on her exemplary behavior serves to reinforce her status as a model of virtue and selflessness, especially in moments of collective hardship.

A particularly notable moment in the tabloids' coverage of Queen Elizabeth II was the extensive reporting on her death and funeral. Following her passing, the tabloids dedicated entire issues to reflecting on her life, work, and enduring legacy. The front pages during this period were characterized by simplicity and solemnity, often featuring a single, powerful image of the Queen alongside a short, poignant message such as “Thank you,” as seen in the *Daily Mirror* (Figure 12). The *Daily Star* even altered its iconic red logo to black, further emphasizing the gravity of the moment. These tributes highlighted the immense respect and admiration the public held for her, with one article aptly stating, “Through her long years of unstinting service, she was a shining light for humanity, illuminating our path by her example of dedication and bringing us together with her dignity.”⁸³ This portrayal reinforces the image of the Queen not just as a sovereign, but as a beloved and revered figure whose legacy continues to resonate with the nation.

In summary, the Queen’s image in the tabloids is consistently framed with respect and admiration, reflecting both her role as a devoted monarch and as a figure of national unity. Her actions and character, as depicted in these media outlets, resonate with the public, who view her as a steadfast leader dedicated to serving her nation, especially in times of crisis. The tributes

⁸² Richard Palmer, “Queen sets ‘example’ by calling off Xmas party,” *Daily Express*, December 17, 2021, 1.

⁸³ Leo McKinsty, “A shining light for humanity,” *Daily Express*, September 9, 2022, 2.

following her death further reinforce this image, illustrating the lasting impact of her reign on the British people.

5 Tabloid Techniques observed in Royal Family Coverage

This chapter provides an analysis of the actual strategies employed by tabloid newspapers in presenting their content, particularly focusing on the attention-grabbing techniques used in headlines, photographs, language, and overall presentation. The objective is to examine how these elements worked together to engage readers and shape public perception, particularly concerning the portrayal of members of the royal family. By analyzing individual tabloid publications and their distinct approaches, this chapter seeks to identify common patterns and strategies, while also reflecting on the subtle nuances that contribute to the overall impact of these newspapers. The analysis includes a comparison of the different styles adopted by various tabloids, with a focus on the *Daily Express*, *Daily Mirror*, and *Daily Star*, and highlights how their editorial choices influence both the reader's experience and their views on the subjects covered.

To provide a comprehensive analysis of the tabloids' strategies, it is valuable to reflect on the individual features of each publication and synthesize overall observations. One of the most notable aspects of tabloids is their ability to capture the reader's attention, particularly through their headlines. While it is universally acknowledged that headlines must draw the reader in, the level of effort and creativity invested in crafting these headlines was particularly striking. The most effective headlines tend to be short, punchy, and direct, encapsulating the essence of the article in just a few words or by offering a provocative quote from an individual involved in the story. Especially striking were headlines that drew upon pop culture references, such as "Game of Moans" or "Royal Soap Oprah," as discussed earlier. These headlines are effective because they leverage the readers' pre-existing knowledge, making them more likely to engage. Moreover, tabloids do not solely rely on a single headline; instead, they often incorporate multiple subheadings within the article itself. These subheadings, as illustrated by the *Daily Mirror*'s "In Camilla We Trust" (Figure 13), help break up the text, making the page more visually engaging and enhancing readability. These subheadings, varying in font size, style, and color, guide the reader's attention to the most sensational parts of the article. However, it is important to note that readers should not base their understanding of the article solely on the headline, as it is often taken out of context. For instance, in the *Daily Star*'s "Fakey Katie" headline (Figure 8), the article later presents Kate refuting the claim. In this way, headlines play a crucial role in grabbing attention, but they must be viewed with caution, as they can sometimes mislead.

Another key element that complements the headline is the carefully chosen photograph. In tabloid journalism, images are strategically selected to reinforce the headline and enhance the overall narrative of the article. For instance, when a story involves an indignant Queen, the accompanying photograph often exaggerates this sentiment. A telling example of this technique can be seen in the *Daily Star's* front page (Figure 14), where a highly exaggerated image of an angry Queen is paired with the headline "Naff Orf!" While the image and headline suggest an intense confrontation, the article itself reveals the humorous nature of the story, where the Queen refuses to accept the "Oldie of the Year" award at the age of 95 due to her belief that she is too young. The selection of photographs plays a significant role in shaping public perception, as images can evoke strong emotional responses. The portrayal of Kate, for example, often shows her smiling and interacting with children or ordinary citizens, presenting her in a positive light. In contrast, Prince Harry is frequently depicted with a serious expression, potentially cultivating an image of him as troubled or concerned.

Additionally, the language and writing style used in tabloid articles are essential to understanding their impact. As discussed in the theoretical framework and throughout the practical analysis, the use of colloquial language is a common strategy that enhances the reader's connection to the material. This feature is prevalent across all the newspapers analyzed, though the *Daily Star* stands out for its use of more informal, ungrammatical language, abbreviations, and fragmented syntax. Phrases like "Naff orf!" exemplify this tendency and contribute to the paper's more casual tone, which is reflected not only in the headlines but also within the articles themselves. Another linguistic strategy observed is the use of nicknames, such as "Wills" for William and "Chas" for King Charles. These informal terms can humanize the royal figures, making them appear more relatable; however, they can also reduce their perceived status, possibly breaking the power distance between the monarch and public. Also the repetition of specific adjectives, such as "beloved" or "caring," serves to create a favorable image of certain members of the royal family, subtly influencing the reader's perception of these individuals. These linguistic choices, though often subtle, play a crucial role in shaping the public's subconscious views of the royals.

In terms of overall publication style, the *Daily Express* and *Daily Mirror* share similarities, both in content and in their more restrained approach to tabloid journalism. The *Daily Express*, in particular, takes a more reserved approach to its front page, relying on simple black type and featuring fewer articles with accompanying photographs. For example, as seen in Figure 15 and Figure 16, the *Express* features a layout with a greater emphasis on text, as

compared to the more visually dynamic *Daily Star*. While the *Daily Express* limits its front page to around three articles, it provides more detailed content, with photographs playing a secondary role. In contrast, the *Daily Mirror* is slightly more colorful, relying on shorter headlines and a more dynamic presentation of its front page. The *Mirror's* choice of darker colors in more serious stories may subconsciously evoke certain emotions in the reader. Additionally, numerous subheadings and photographs are included to supplement the articles, contributing to a clear, engaging layout.

However, the *Daily Star* distinguishes itself with a more flamboyant approach, characterized by bright colors, bold headlines, and sometimes teasing photo collages that capture the reader's attention immediately. As discussed in previous chapters, the *Daily Star's* tone is unapologetically bold, often taking jabs at the royal family with both sensational and humorous headlines, such as the example "My Wills Got Diddy Sausages" (Figure 2). While some of their content is lighthearted, there is also a more pointed, sometimes critical, tone underlying much of their coverage, particularly when addressing the Sussex family. Despite this, the *Daily Star* tends to devote less attention to less dramatic royal events. For instance, the coverage of William's Annus Horribilis, which appeared prominently in both the *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Express*, was largely absent from the *Daily Star*. The tabloid's colloquial style of writing, which can come across as conversational, makes it feel more relatable to its audience, as if engaging in a friendly chat over a pint. This relaxed style, while more accessible, can also detract from the paper's credibility. The *Daily Star's* often biased portrayal of the royal family may influence readers' perceptions, shaping their views in a manner that reflects the paper's editorial stance.

In conclusion, the strategies employed by tabloid newspapers, including creative headline construction, strategic use of photographs, colloquial language, and layout choices, play a significant role in capturing readers' attention and shaping their perceptions. The tabloids analyzed demonstrate a range of approaches, from the more reserved style of the *Daily Express* and *Daily Mirror* to the bold and often provocative tactics of the *Daily Star*. Each publication utilizes these techniques to maintain reader engagement while also subtly influencing public opinion, particularly regarding the royal family. The findings underscore the power of tabloid journalism in crafting narratives that, though often exaggerated or sensationalized, can significantly impact the way readers view public figures. Ultimately, these strategies highlight the complex relationship between media content, reader engagement, and public perception.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined the media portrayal of the British royal family between 2020 and 2025, with a particular focus on the role of tabloid journalism in shaping public perceptions. By analyzing both historical and contemporary perspectives, the study has demonstrated how the monarchy's relationship with the media has evolved and how different editorial strategies influence the construction of royal narratives. The findings highlight that the representation of the royal family is not neutral but is shaped by editorial biases, commercial incentives, and broader societal attitudes toward the institution of monarchy.

The theoretical part of the thesis provided an overview of the historical development of the relationship between the monarchy and the media, tracing its evolution from the era of traditional print journalism to the digital age. It examined key moments such as the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II and the increasing use of social media as a platform for direct royal communication. Additionally, the study explored the transformation of the British press, particularly the rise of tabloid journalism, which has significantly altered the ways in which members of the royal family are depicted. The shift from formal and deferential coverage to sensationalist and, at times, invasive reporting has had a profound impact on the monarchy's public image.

The practical part of the study focused on an analysis of three major British tabloid newspapers—*Daily Mirror*, *Daily Star*, and *Daily Express*—and their portrayal of individual members of the royal family. The findings indicate that different members of the monarchy are subject to varying media framings, reflecting both their public roles and the editorial positions of the publications. King Charles III is predominantly portrayed as a compassionate yet scrutinized leader, whose reign is shaped by both personal and institutional challenges. Prince William and Catherine, Princess of Wales, are depicted in a highly favorable manner, reinforcing their image as the future of a modern and stable monarchy. In contrast, Prince Harry and Meghan Markle are frequently framed as controversial figures, with media narratives emphasizing conflict and division. The portrayal of Queen Elizabeth II, both before and after her passing, remains overwhelmingly positive, reaffirming her status as a symbol of stability, duty, and national unity.

Beyond the specific portrayals of individual figures, the analysis identified recurring strategies employed by the tabloid press, including the use of emotive language, provocative headlines, selective imagery, and dramatized storytelling techniques. These methods are

instrumental in shaping the public's perception of the royal family, reinforcing admiration for certain members while intensifying criticism of others. The study also demonstrated that, although traditional tabloid media continues to wield significant influence, the rise of digital platforms and social media has contributed to an increasingly fragmented media landscape. This shift complicates the monarchy's ability to manage its public image, as competing narratives proliferate across various media channels, often beyond the control of the institution itself.

Ultimately, this thesis has demonstrated that the media plays a crucial role in constructing and reinforcing public perceptions of the British royal family. Rather than serving as a passive channel of information, tabloid journalism actively shapes the discourse surrounding the monarchy, reflecting and amplifying societal attitudes toward the institution. By highlighting the mechanisms through which the media influences public opinion, this study contributes to a broader understanding of the intersection between journalism, popular culture, and contemporary perceptions of the British monarchy. The findings suggest that, despite the monarchy's efforts to adapt to a rapidly evolving media environment, its image remains subject to ongoing scrutiny, negotiation, and reinterpretation within the public sphere.

Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá mediálním obrazem britské královské rodiny v letech 2020–2025, přičemž se zaměřuje na způsob, jakým britský bulvární tisk ovlivňuje vnímání jednotlivých členů monarchie veřejností. Cílem práce je analyzovat, jak vybrané deníky (Daily Mirror, Daily Star a Daily Express) zobrazují členy královské rodiny, jaké narativy a jazykové strategie používají a jak tyto mediální obrazy reflektují širší společenské postoje vůči monarchii.

První kapitola poskytuje historický kontext vztahu britské monarchie s médii. Sleduje, jak se královská rodina prezentovala v tradičních médiích, jako byly noviny a rozhlas, a jak se adaptovala na nástup televize a digitálních médií. Zvláštní důraz je kladen na klíčové momenty, jako byla televizní korunovace královny Alžběty II., dokumentární film *Royal Family* z roku 1969 nebo rostoucí role sociálních sítí v současnosti. Kapitola ukazuje, že vztah monarchie s médii je dynamický a že královská rodina musí neustále přizpůsobovat svůj obraz veřejnosti.

Druhá kapitola představuje hlavní osobnosti, jejichž mediální obraz je analyzován v praktické části práce. Popisuje život a veřejné působení krále Karla III., prince Williama a jeho manželky Catherine, prince Harryho a Meghan Markle, stejně jako dědictví královny Alžběty II. Kapitola poskytuje kontext pro pochopení jejich rolí v monarchii a důvodů, proč jsou jednotlivé postavy předmětem intenzivního mediálního zájmu.

Třetí kapitola se zaměřuje na vývoj britských médií se zvláštním důrazem na bulvární tisk. Popisuje vznik a rozmach bulvárních deníků, jako jsou *The Sun*, *Daily Mirror* a *Daily Star*, a jejich rostoucí zaměření na senzace, skandály a osobní životy celebrit včetně královské rodiny. Kapitola analyzuje specifika britského tabloidního stylu, včetně senzacechtivých titulků, zjednodušeného jazyka a emocionálně laděných narativů, které ovlivňují způsob, jakým veřejnost vnímá královskou rodinu.

Praktická část se věnuje analýze mediálního obrazu konkrétních členů královské rodiny v britských bulvárních denících *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Star* a *Daily Express* v daném období. Analyzováni jsou zejména král Karel III., princ William a Catherine, princ Harry a Meghan Markle a Alžběta II. Studie se soustředí na opakující se motivy, jazykové strategie a způsoby zobrazování jednotlivých osobností. Pozornost je věnována kontrastům mezi pozitivními a negativními zobrazeními a tomu, jak jsou události jako smrt královny Alžběty II., korunovace Karla III. či odchod Harryho a Meghan z královských povinností prezentovány veřejnosti prostřednictvím médií.

Dále práce zkoumá techniky bulvárního tisku, jako jsou senzacechtivé titulky, manipulativní jazyk, výběr fotografií a užívání emocionálně nabitých narativů, které ovlivňují veřejné mínění o královské rodině. Studie ukazuje, že mediální reprezentace monarchie v bulvárních médiích často odráží širší společenské nálady a polarizaci veřejnosti vůči královské instituci.

Závěrem práce konstatuje, že média hrají zásadní roli v utváření veřejného obrazu královské rodiny. Bulvární tisk často využívá dvojího přístupu, kdy na jedné straně idealizuje některé členy monarchie (zejména prince Williama a Catherine), zatímco jiné staví do negativního světla (zejména prince Harryho a Meghan Markle). Tato dynamika nejen odráží redakční postoje jednotlivých médií, ale také přispívá k formování veřejného diskurzu o roli a budoucnosti britské monarchie v současné společnosti.

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Figure 1 Daily Express - Diagnosis makes him more relatable



Figure 2 Daily Star - My Willy's got diddy sausages



Figure 3 Daily Mirror – Together..Yet apart



Figure 4 Daily Mirror - Queen to Harry

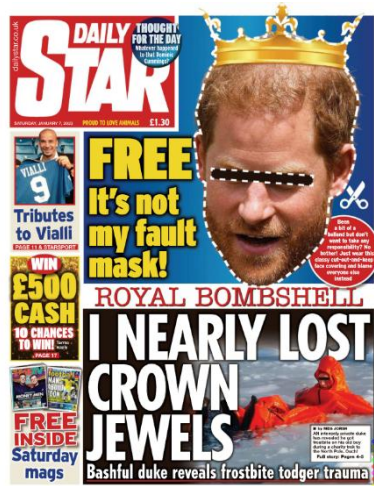


Figure 5 Daily Star - FREE It's not my fault mask



Figure 6 Daily Express - Caring Kate's hug



Figure 7 Daily Mirror - Kate: Get back to nurture



Figure 8 Daily Star - Fakey Katie



Figure 9 Daily Express - Kate's cuties are full of family fun



Figure 10 Daily Express - SPOT ON: Kate steals the show



Figure 11 Daily Mirror - Meg: Royals caused Harry pain



Figure 12 Daily Mirror - Thank you



Figure 13 Daily Mirror - In Camilla we trust..

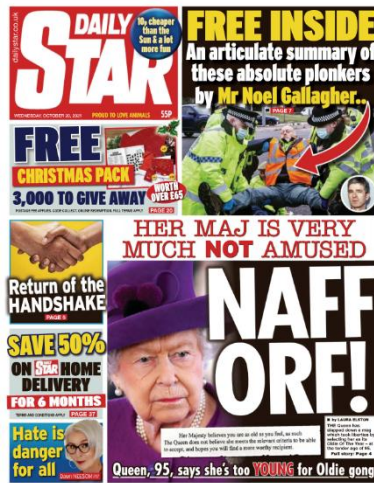


Figure 14 Daily Star - Naff orf!



Figure 15 Daily Express – 'William grabbed me and knocked me to the floor'

TALE OF THE TAPES
Handbags at dawn!

Mr Shy virgin on ridiculous!

KATE AND WILLS SO NAZI TO ME

25 Tali tally

'Don't wed Cam'

Hew are joking

Sense of gratitude

P-WORD SLUR A GAFFE

Figure 16 Daily Star – Mr Shy virgin on ridiculous!

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