

**EPISODE 227**

[INTRODUCTION]

**[00:00:09] ANNOUNCER:** Welcome to this week's episode of Coffee with a Journalist brought to you by the team at OnePitch. Are you looking for a more efficient way to find and pitch the right journalists? Head to our website at [onepitch.co](http://onepitch.co) to learn more.

Our guest on today's episode of Coffee with a Journalist is Radhika Seth, Film and Culture Editor at British Vogue. During the episode, Radhika discusses the beauty of advocacy through fashion journalism, why simplicity is an underrated PR strategy, her dream sources, and more.

[INTERVIEW]

**[00:00:37] BB:** Welcome, everyone. This is Coffee with a Journalist. I'm Beck Bamberger, and we talk about wonderful journalists, reporters, editors, people we need to talk to to help our jobs as publicists go easier, hopefully, hopefully. That's kind of the goal here. We like to learn a lot of juicy insights on pitching and what not to do, what also to do. That's why we do this little show.

With us today, coming all the way from Britain, this is very exciting because I also am a Vogue reader, not a British Vogue reader but we'll talk about this, is the Film and Culture Editor from British Vogue. Radhika Seth is here with us. Hello, Radhika. Thank you for being here.

**[00:01:18] RS:** Hi, Beck. Thanks so much for having me on, so exciting.

**[00:01:20] BB:** Yes. God, how fun is your job, Film and Culture for British Vogue? Okay.

**[00:01:28] RS:** It's actually the best.

**[00:01:31] BB:** I would imagine. Yes. First off, first off, before we get into all that, for maybe those not as familiar because we do like to just give some context, what would you say is the coverage lens now of British Vogue specifically? We like to get an update.

**[00:01:48] RS:** Yes. That's such an interesting question because, of course, we're sort of the fashion bible, and fashion is very much the focus. But, also, I think, especially in the last few years but even longer than that, we're really also a place to go for culture and travel, food, everything as pertains to lifestyle. It is quite broad I would say, and that's kind of the joy of working here. I think it's fashion, but it's also everything else that our readers really care about. That can include, yes, as I said, film, TV, politics, everything.

**[00:02:20] BB:** It's wide-ranging. Yes. It's way more than just, "Oh, what pencil skirt should I look at today?" Yes. No. That is great. You also – I just want to shout this out because it's rare that I've seen this too often. You've been with the Condé Nast empire for a while. You were with Traveller. You were an intern in a couple spots, but then you were at British Vogue as a digital assistant, then a features associate. I mean, look at you staying in an outlet so long. I love it.

**[00:02:43] RS:** Yes. It's quite rare these days because yes.

**[00:02:45] BB:** I was like, "Oh, look at this." Actually, that begs a question. What has inspired you to stay in or with an outlet so long or a house of outlets I should say?

**[00:02:58] RS:** Yes. I feel like it was sort of British Vogue was the second place I ever interned. I think when you work elsewhere and then you come back to Vogue particularly, I think the kind of access you get here is pretty unparalleled, I think. I think people just really want to work with us and be featured. I think because of the history it has, there is something incredibly special about it. It's nice to be able to have that and to be able to champion designers as well but also filmmakers and actors that you love, and give them this platform that I think still has this kind of cache, if that makes sense. I think it's a great feeling to be able to work somewhere like that. But, also, yes, to bestow the Vogue seal of approval. When me and my wonderful colleagues do, it still has this power that's wonderful, I think.

**[00:03:44] BB:** Yes. Ah, how great. Let's go to now your inbox and how is it. What is going on in there?

**[00:03:53] RS:** It's very full, which I think is what you hear from all journalists that you speak to.

**[00:04:00] BB:** Yes, commonly. Yes.

**[00:04:01] RS:** Yes. It's a lot of great stuff. I never want to complain about that, and I think we hear from everyone, PRs from all sections in terms of new releases and new talent. It's all great stuff. But, also, among that, there's also things that are maybe less relevant for us. I think listening to the podcast, I love listening to the other episodes of the podcast and hearing –

**[00:04:22] BB:** Yes. You did your homework. Yes, yes, yes.

**[00:04:25] RS:** I did. I think in terms of clients, obviously, want a lot of a number of emails sent out. Sometimes, I think we get inundated with things that maybe aren't as relevant. I think those targeted pictures are the things that really make my day. But I think, sometimes, there's a lot to wade through before you get to those.

**[00:04:43] BB:** Yes. Okay. So then with all the stuff that you do get, what's your organization process? Or do you – are you just flying here?

**[00:04:50] RS:** I'm a folder girl.

**[00:04:51] BB:** You're a folder – okay. Tell us a little bit about the folders then because this is always, I think, the intriguing part for publicists is like, “Oh, how do I get in a folder, and how do I hold that folder?” Yes.

**[00:05:01] RS:** Yes. Because I'm kind of – well, I try to be a zero-inbox person, which is definitely easier said than done. But that's kind of –

**[00:05:05] BB:** Yes. My gosh. That's my goal.

**[00:05:09] RS:** Yes. If I don't see something, it will just bother me the whole time. I feel like I need to see everything.

**[00:05:12] BB:** I know. I know.

**[00:05:14] RS:** But then you want to reply to everything, but there's just not the times. There will be mass deleting of stuff that's just not relevant to me. But then folders, I think I have a press releases folder. I think for new releases, if I see something and it's a press release or something, I'll keep it in a folder. What I'm looking for, what's coming out next month, I have a place to go that has everything in one place.

**[00:05:34] BB:** Oh, okay.

**[00:05:35] RS:** Yes. It's targeted, depending on what it is, so new talent and whether it's like I go to film festivals, which is amazing [inaudible 00:05:41]. Those, I'll pop it into that. When I need to look for something specific, I can go into a folder. In theory, it will all be there when I need it.

**[00:05:51] BB:** In theory. In theory, of course. Yes. I would imagine for you, you're writing about films coming out, of course. So the timing and like, "Okay, what do I have on deck for? Oh, my God. August or versus September or all these things." The timeliness does take precedent, of course, so you got to keep a tight game I'd imagine.

**[00:06:08] RS:** You do and stuff changes all the time. Of course, it does. It's hard to remember sometimes what's coming out when. We have editorial calendars and things, but to keep everything updated just is so time-consuming. I think to have a place to go, you look through them, and you have the updated dates for everything, who's in what. It's just good to have that to hand if possible.

**[00:06:28] BB:** By the way, are you trying to manually do that? Or do you have helpers for this?

**[00:06:32] RS:** It's just me. Yes.

**[00:06:33] BB:** Oh, my God. Wow.

**[00:06:35] RS:** Yes. It's hard to find. Yes. You have to – we do a lot of writing. There's a lot going on during the day, so it's just try and move with that as quickly as possible. I try to keep as

close to zero as I can during the day. But there'll be days where I'm deep in the piece and then I

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**[00:06:48] BB:** Runs away. Yes.

**[00:06:49] RS:** Yes. I come out of it, and I have, I don't know, hundreds of emails to go through.

**[00:06:53] BB:** Yes. Oh, hundreds.

**[00:06:54] RS:** You know. You relate.

**[00:06:57] BB:** Yes, yes. Okay. What then stands out for you with a pitch? Specifically, let's start with just the subject line because you first got to get past the subject line.

**[00:07:07] RS:** Yes. I think, especially for publicist PR pitches, I think clarity. Simplicity is quite underrated sometimes. I'm very happy with if you're pitching a new talent to me, name – then the projects they have coming up or things I might know them from. That immediate recognition is great and super useful to me. I know you asked us to look at pitches. Pitched subject lines are less useful. I would say, sometimes, I've received emails and pitches that have been like subject line is, "Have you seen," and then it's the name of a TV show. Then the email body is blank.

**[00:07:45] BB:** What? There's nothing in the email?

**[00:07:47] RS:** No. It's just a subject line.

**[00:07:49] BB:** Are you – and you're supposed to respond to that?

**[00:07:52] RS:** Yes.

**[00:07:53] BB:** This is a first. I've never heard this before. Never.

**[00:07:56] RS:** Yes. It's been multiple times and I don't – I think maybe people are working at speed. Or maybe it's an intriguing thing, and you reply because you don't know what it's about. But I just would prefer to know.

**[00:08:11] BB:** I have never heard that, subject line with nothing in the – wow, wow. Okay. Well, let's switch, if we may, to then what is then – if you get the body of a pitch, what is in there that is enticing where you go, “Yes. Oh, I need to respond to that right now,” or whatnot?

**[00:08:35] RS:** Yes. I think I have alert set up for all the trade publications and stuff. I try to keep on top of what's coming out and what to know about. If it's a release that I recognize straight away, that's really, really helpful to me. If you have something like it's won some prizes. Say it's won something at Cannes or Venice or something that I would recognize. If it's a talent that I've seen in something else maybe but not featured, I think to have things that are recognizable in that way and just have it be quite concise. There may be some images, quite useful, links, anything that can give me that information as quickly as possible.

**[00:09:10] BB:** So you do like links, not necessarily attachments and all that crap.

[BREAK]

**[00:09:16] ANNOUNCER:** Today's interview will continue after this brief message brought to you by OnePitch. Are you curious to learn about the unique ways OnePitch helps brands engage with the right journalists? Head to [onepitch.co](https://onepitch.co) and create your own custom media list in five minutes or less. Now, back to today's episode.

[INTERVIEW RESUMED]

**[00:09:39] RS:** Yes. I like links. I also say from a film perspective, if you can also send me a screener with it, it's way so helpful. Sometimes, people do do that, and it's, obviously, password protected, et cetera. But it's just great to be able to watch something. Then I can flag it. I can star it. Put it into my screener's folder. Then I can watch it. I can respond in terms of if we want to feature that talent or cover something.

I think, sometimes, the screener processing, particularly for film journalists, it can be a little bit convoluted. There are Netflix, Apple. You have very straightforward systems. But for some other places, I think sometimes you have multifactorial authentication. All my passwords have expired. It's so much fast to arrange it that sometimes I'm just – it's like I can't do this today because it's just so time-consuming. I think if you send me a link, you send me a password, and I can watch it without it expiring. It's so useful, and I'm much more likely to do it.

**[00:10:34] BB:** Yes, yes. That is something – I think, increasingly, I'm hearing on this show is, yes, the damn link inspiring. Or I got to now sign up for this to get to the box file and this and that. It's like, “Ah.” It's just – no, no.

**[00:10:48] RS:** It's like an obstacle course sometimes, isn't it?

**[00:10:49] BB:** It is a little bit. Yes. I get – I'm like, “What's the tech solution here?” Of course, it's security, and that's oriented [inaudible 00:10:55]. But, man, I don't know. We'll see. Okay. Now, how much time are you spending consuming films, like actually watching the TV series and so forth that you do? I think that's a little distinct from other journalists we have on here who are like, “Oh, let me review the product. Or let me think about that topic. Let me do my seven interviews.” Okay, boom. Yours is quite different I imagine.

**[00:11:20] RS:** It is and it's too much time, definitely. It's always too much stuff, and there's so much more I want to watch that I have time for, and it's not during the day. We have a lot to do during the day in terms of news and writing and interviewing, et cetera. It's always in the evening. I would say most evenings, I'm at screenings or I'm at home watching, powering through screeners at home as well. It's a lot of time. But, I mean, it's so fun. I mean, I grew up obsessed with film. If I think about doing that now, it's incredible.

**[00:11:53] BB:** This sounds very much like your purpose then. You're in your purpose.

**[00:11:56] RS:** I feel that way. I always grew up obsessed.

**[00:11:57] BB:** I love that.

**[00:11:59] RS:** Obsessed, obsessed with it. It's amazing to get to see stuff and also to get to see stuff so early as well. It's incredible.

**[00:12:06] BB:** I love that. I love someone who's like, "This is my jam. This is what I'm about." We're working on purpose. It's a project in the land of BAM and OnePitch and all this good stuff on just defining it, writing about it, talking about it, owning it really, so that is so good to hear.

**[00:12:20] RS:** Yes. I love that.

**[00:12:21] BB:** Okay. How may, Radhika, publicists make your job easier if there is such a thing?

**[00:12:28] RS:** Yes. We also spoke about simplicity. No mysterious emails for a start.

**[00:12:33] BB:** God, no.

**[00:12:34] RS:** It'd be great. I think one of the things that we've been talking about increasingly on our desk that's super useful is because we work in the UK, but also we work very closely with our American colleagues in the US. They do syndicate our stories. Something I write for vogue.co.uk will then appear on vogue.com often quite shortly afterwards. I think, sometimes, publicists are working in quite a regional specific way. If a TV show comes out, say, months after in the UK, months after it's coming out in the US.

They're difficult for us because I feel like the Internet is this place where conversations happen quite early. Then they're quite quickly over. I feel like we like to cover things as soon as possible as when they're out in their first region, if that makes sense.

**[00:13:21] BB:** Yes. That's the other thing for your turn of things is a hot movie is maybe not hot two, three weeks from now. It's not like an ongoing topic where you're reporting on, okay, AI regulation. Well, you're going to be talking about that forever. I just – I feel for you basically. I feel for you.



**[00:13:38] RS:** Yes. I think it's been – we've spoken to a few publicists about it, and I think it is we are kind of finding solutions to it now. We're just trying to cover things as early as possible and in line with US release dates. I think if we just weigh, it's difficult. But, also, I understand that publicists are working in very regional-specific ways, and they have things they need to deliver and embargos that need to be held. But there are shows that come out so much later here, and they're forgotten because people have – not me but people have maybe watched them illegally or they've consumed them already.

**[00:14:08] BB:** I have not thought about that, just with –

**[00:14:11] RS:** I feel like it happens more than we acknowledge it.

**[00:14:14] BB:** Yes. Unlike a breaking piece of legislation or something, it's not like it's –

**[00:14:18] RS:** Exactly.

**[00:14:18] BB:** You could watch it five weeks ago. Oh, what an interesting twist for your job.

**[00:14:23] RS:** Yes. I feel like – yes. It's been – we're trying to do things earlier now, and I think it's working really well. But I think it's an ongoing conversation with publicists because I feel like it's difficult to explain sometimes. But it's hard to start that conversation months after it's already happened elsewhere.

**[00:14:38] BB:** Yes. Wow. Okay. Is there anything, Radhika, that you find grounds you, let's just say, with all this pitch frenziness and all these elements that you need to be dancing around, constant beat? Do you have like a hack for how you manage this, besides inbox zero, which you try to get to, but just a thought?

**[00:14:58] RS:** I think it's to enjoy the process of it, if that makes sense. I think –

**[00:15:02] BB:** Yes, enjoy the chaos.

**[00:15:04] RS:** Yes. I think I love writing, and I'm so happy that I get to do it and particularly to cover stuff that I really love. I think, sometimes, you can get obsessed. I definitely do with getting to that place where everything is off your list, and you've done everything. But it's kind of impossible, and it's never going to happen because it's an ongoing process. Yes.

**[00:15:23] BB:** No. I feel like that's just like adulting hardcore with a high demanding job is that you have to just be at peace with it's never done. You can accomplish this much, and then you're like, "And I could do those 17 other things, but it's not going to happen right now." Oh, yes.

**[00:15:40] RS:** Yes. Enjoy the process along the way which is kind of hard sometimes. But I think –

**[00:15:44] BB:** It is, dang. Yes.

**[00:15:44] RS:** I love writing. When I'm deep in a piece and I'm really enjoying it, it's like, "Oh, okay. This is the reason that you're doing it. It's so fun." You have to give yourself the grace to then come back to the other stuff that you need to reply to maybe tomorrow. It's okay.

**[00:16:01] BB:** Oh, God. Okay. Radhika, I have a short little fire round of questions for you. Are you ready?

**[00:16:08] RS:** Yes, let's go.

**[00:16:09] BB:** Let's do it. Let's do it. Video or phone interview?

**[00:16:12] RS:** I love video.

**[00:16:14] BB:** Of course. You're visually inclined. Okay. Bullet points or paragraphs in a pitch, assuming you get one?

**[00:16:21] RS:** Yes. I think short paragraph is great.

**[00:16:22] BB:** Short paragraphs. Good. Okay. That covers our long or short pitches. Okay. We talked a little bit about this, but ever do you wish to have just attached images? Or do you want the Dropbox file with no password, of course?

**[00:16:35] RS:** Yes. I think my Dropbox is perpetually full, so attached is great.

**[00:16:39] BB:** Attached if you can get it. Good. Do you wish to have pitches just email? Or do you ever want any DM of any sort?

**[00:16:45] RS:** Love DMs if you want to talk about a piece. But anything sort of work-related that requires me responding, email is great.

**[00:16:52] BB:** Yes. There you go. Okay. How about one follow-up or multiple?

**[00:16:56] RS:** I think one is good.

**[00:16:57] BB:** One and done. That's it. Direct or creative subject lines?

**[00:17:02] RS:** Very happy with direct.

**[00:17:05] BB:** Yes. Despite the super creative space you're in, right? You want to talk about the creative stuff, not [inaudible 00:17:11] subject line. Yes. Okay. How about press release or media kit?

**[00:17:16] RS:** Press release. I think if it's concise in one place, not lots of different links. I don't want to worry about missing something, so press release is good.

**[00:17:22] BB:** Okay. Good. Is there a time of the day that's your like peak pitch reading time? I know you're doing the zero inbox. So is it just all the time? We already kind of talked about it's all the time.

**[00:17:32] RS:** It's all the time, but in the morning is a good time generally I think.

**[00:17:36] BB:** Morning, British time, by the way.

**[00:17:37] RS:** Yes, yes.

**[00:17:38] BB:** That's right. Make sure you're sending your pitches on time. Okay. Then what about sources? Any sources you're looking for?

**[00:17:44] RS:** Yes. Such an interesting question I think because I mainly do – I do interviews, news stories, reviews. It's not very source-heavy. But I think when I write commentary pieces, which is not that often. But if I do, I love talking to directors and writers. I also would love to talk to more award season consultants. But, actually, they don't really want to speak to journalists, which I understand. But if anyone does, please contact me.

**[00:18:08] BB:** Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. Award season consultants? What a fabulous – yes.

**[00:18:13] RS:** Consultants who are hired for Oscar campaigns. Oscars are my special obsession.

**[00:18:20] BB:** Oh, okay. What do these people do?

**[00:18:23] RS:** They lead these big award season campaigns.

**[00:18:25] BB:** Oh, to get you the award, right?

**[00:18:27] RS:** To get to the awards. Yes. They're like months long and very – I just – I'm so fascinated by them, so I would love to speak to anyone who does that. I think they –

**[00:18:37] BB:** Fascinating, fascinating.

**[00:18:39] RS:** Yes. Do not speak to press, which I forget.

**[00:18:42] BB:** Why don't they, by the way? Because they don't want to tell you what they're trying to do and accomplish or what films are working on. They don't want you to get the scoop.

**[00:18:50] RS:** Yes. I feel like it's a very high-pressure job, and you're hired for this amount of time to make something happen. I feel like it's maybe counterintuitive, counterproductive to speak to journalists about it.

**[00:18:58] BB:** Yes. Dang, dang, dang, dang. Yes.

**[00:19:00] RS:** But I would love to know how they work.

**[00:19:03] BB:** This is why I just love this podcast. First of all, journalists and reporters, editors are the sharpest most multi-talented people there are because you just have to be in order to survive this field. But secondly because, wow, you learn of all these source, all the people who have a very specific job in the world. You're like, "Wow." Oh, look at that.

**[00:19:21] RS:** Yes. It's so cool and I would love to write more about campaigns as well. It's like one of the things I'm, yes, most interested in. But it's very hard to hear about them, so.

**[00:19:31] BB:** Yes. Okay, publicists. You heard it here. Let's see. Okay. Radhika, we didn't get into relationship building, so I want to ask that. Then we can wrap up here. Is there any way in which, for example, that juicy source to make a relationship with you? Or is it really, "Send me good pitches consistently. Don't waste my time."?

**[00:19:50] RS:** Yes. Definitely email me. I think it's sort of we are in the office during the day, and it's a lot of writing and getting things up on the site. There's not tons of time, I think, for me to go out and meet people. But I think if I've worked with some publicists on numerous stories, it's clear that they can get me a good scoop. Tell me about something that's coming out really early. Yes. I love meeting publicists when I've worked with you. It's really useful to have that relationship because I love, yes, hearing about stuff as early as possible and getting to see stuff and knowing how we can cover those big, big releases. Yes, I would love to meet for a coffee.

**[00:20:25] BB:** Okay, in London. Keep that in mind. Radhika, is there anything left that you want to promote, tout, have us know, anything like that?

**[00:20:35] RS:** I would just say maybe the next big thing I have coming up is I'm going to Venice Film Festival at the end of August which will be amazing. But, yes, we'll have, hopefully, lots of interviews, reviews, great stories coming from that. If your listeners want to read them on [vogue.co.uk](http://vogue.co.uk) [inaudible 00:20:51], that would be great.

**[00:20:52] BB:** I love it. By the way, how many film festivals do you usually get to in a year?

**[00:20:56] RS:** Since last year, I've been to Cannes and to Venice. They are just the most bonkers places on Earth, and I love them. It's like you don't sleep for a week.

**[00:21:06] BB:** I bet it's freaking fun.

**[00:21:08] RS:** It's amazing. I mean, it's two of my favorite places in the world, so I can't wait.

**[00:21:13] BB:** Ah, I love it. Radhika, thank you for being here with us today. She is the Film and Culture Editor of British Vogue, everybody. Meet her for coffee. Maybe see her at a film festival. Oh, how fun would that be? Radhika, if I ever show up, I'll be like, "Oh, is she out?" I'm going to hit you up and be like, "Are you here? Are you here?" It'd be so great.

**[00:21:30] RS:** Please, just text me. We need to go for a drink and soak up the atmosphere, basically.

**[00:21:35] BB:** I love it, wonderful. Thank you, again.

**[00:21:37] RS:** Thank you so much for having me, Beck. Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[00:21:40] ANNOUNCER:** Thanks for listening to this week's Coffee with a Journalist episode with Radhika Seth, Film and Culture Editor at British Vogue. For more exclusive insights about the journalists on this podcast, subscribe to our weekly podcast newsletter at [onepitch.co/](http://onepitch.co/) podcast. We'll see you next week. But until then, start great stories.

[END]