

Harry Potter Business Magic

The Marketing Magic You Never Knew

Narrative Ambiguity Mystery Amusement

Harry Potter is among the most noteworthy brand stories of late years. So much so, that there can't be one individual anyplace who hasn't heard the name. For several, naturally, Harry Potter is simply a passing fad. However it's arguable that the Harry Potter brand bears lessons that are crucial to the whole marketing community.

A few success factors may be tentatively distinguished. First there's Narrative. Harry Potter typifies the storytelling tendency that characterizes present-day corporate culture. Storytelling is the management technique of the moment.

The intriguing thing about the Harry Potter story, all the same, is that it consists of several stories. There's bookselling, the movie franchise, the merchandise, the anti-witchcraft critics, the over-enthusiastic consumers, the in progress, non-stop publicity, the unresolved story of what'll occur next. Each of these stories draws nourishment from, contributes to, and at times contradicts, the other brand stories. In a world where storytelling is increasingly old-hat, it must be a regal brand story, a magical brand story, and a many-sided brand story.

Second is ambiguity. The Harry Potter stories appeal to grownups and youngsters alike.

Narrative

Ambiguity

Mystery

Amusement



Today, ambiguity isn't a word that marketers are comfortable with. We're taught that images have to be consistent, logical and clear-cut. But we're moving away from the era of monolithic marketing to polymorphic marketing. Harry Potter is the poster boy of that trend today.

Third is mystery. The books are mysterious. Marketing too is profoundly mysterious. It's mystical not only in the sense that we still don't understand how advertising works exactly. Mystery is a marketing maneuver in itself. Think about the "hidden" recipes that help sell all sorts of things: Coke, KFC, and many others.

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Think about the gift-giving business, which is predicated on mysteries, surprises and delayed satisfaction, as are gift-rich affairs like Christmas Day and birthdays.

Fourth is amusement. Whatever else it is, the Harry Potter phenomenon is hugely entertaining. The response of the public is entertaining. The response of the Harry-haters is entertaining also. And, lest we forget, the merchandising campaigns are marvelously entertaining. If nothing else, Harry Potter reminds us of the easily blanked out fact that what we do is awesome fun.

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When all is said and done, Harry Potter typifies today's amusement economic system. There's no business without show biz and where hot products, the next huge thing, and the thing after that. It seems to me that today's marketers have much to learn in general and Harry Potter particularly shows this.



The mysteries of Harry Potter's success are hence fourfold: **Narrative**, **ambiguity**, **enigma and amusement**. If you want to make a name for your brand, this is the name of the game.

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