Marketing Strategy of Harry Potter

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1) INTRODUCTION:

On 21st July 2007 history was created in the world of book publishing. Borders Group sold 15 million copies of "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows" in its first day, the biggest single-day number ever for the superstore chain. The previous Potter, "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince," sold 850,000 copies at Borders on its first day of release in 2005. Marketing of books has never been the same since.

It must be magic. Welcome to the fantasy world of Harry Potter- the mega brand.

In about 10 years, Harry Potter has become one of the world's most widely recognised names. It is a brand name indeed. In terms of books sold, Harry Potter stands third in the all-time literary charts behind the Bible and The Thoughts of Chairman Mao. And, I suspect, HP is read rather more avidly over the past 10 years than either of those other literary heavyweights.

But is it a brand - and what makes it one? Our understanding of brands ranges from 'it's a logo' to 'it's a set of values by which one organises and drives a business'. On the first, simple definition, Harry Potter's lightning flash is becoming as recognisable as Nike's swoosh or the golden arches of McDonald's, and he has many other distinctive brand elements such as ownable words. 'Quidditch', for example, was recently voted one of the nation's favourite words in U.K, even though it has yet to find its way into most dictionaries.

On the second definition, it's tempting simply to let the figures make the case: Worldwide sales figure is 400 million books, with translations into 67 languages, including Ancient Greek. With films made of the first six books in the series (and number seven bound to follow) almost £1 billion has been earned at the global box office. But let's not forget the £430 million worth of DVD and video sales, more than 400 items of merchandise and a brand valuation of £2.2bn.

This success is a triumph of marketing. Perhaps not marketing in its most traditional or conventional form, but marketing as it has been developing and will continue to develop.
Harry Potter - or his creator, JK Rowling, and the marketing machine that now surrounds her creation - has used the techniques of branding and marketing in a way that can only be envied (and will no doubt be copied) by other super-brands. Every retailer who has ever picked up a book has been falling over itself in its haste to sell Harry Potter's latest at virtually cost price. They simply want a little of the glory, the magic, to translate into the patter of greater footfall in their shops. Rowling has created Harry Potter using branding techniques and the books themselves are full of brilliantly invented brands, corporate strategies, advertising campaigns and every element of the marketing mix. In effect, they make a textbook case for marketing.

SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

The present case examines how the Harry Potter series of books led to the creation of a multi-billion dollar business for various companies across the world in the early 21st century. The creation, development and management of Harry Potter as a brand is examined in detail. The case then describes the various marketing and promotional activities taken up by Harry Potter's author and publishers in the UK and the US. Thereafter, the case examines how Warner Brothers (which acquired its worldwide licensing and movie rights), turned the brand into an immensely successful marketing property. The case also explains the reasons why Warner Brothers and J.K Rowling were very protective about the brand and what precautions they took to ensure that the brand's image does not get diluted. Finally, the case also comments about the future business prospects of the Harry Potter brand.
2. IMPORTANCE OF THE TOPIC:

The single most important factor behind choosing this topic is the volume of business HP has created for itself and for several associated industries. The following chart shows a comparison of brand values of several important brands.

The following important issues relating to the HP Brand are to be noted-

a) Its carefully designed marketing efforts for creating and managing the strong brand

b) The synergies between the print and entertainment media and how successful books have been made into movies

c) The marketing of such movies.

Successful implementation of all these have created such a huge value for this brand. It’s not just the story alone but the carefully crafted marketing design, which made the brand HP what it is today.
Harry potter has become a common household name. The book appeals to people of all ages. The target customer is not merely the children but the child inside every human being. By creating a whole new world of fantasy it draws attention of people cutting across all ages, regions etc. Never before had people stood in line at midnight to get their hands on the first copy. All the emotional elements like adventure, mystery, romance etc are embedded in a most dexterous fashion. Another important aspect is the fantasy solution to human problems. Human beings are leading a life of constraints today. Traveling on a broomstick avoiding traffic congestion or a clock telling where each member of the family is, are some of the needs of every parent. Also any battered person working in a competitive world will find plenty of characters equivalent to the concept of Dementors or Death Eaters.

It’s therefore necessary to study in depth all the aspects that made these books such huge success. HP books are full of insights into marketing excellence – but they are more fun to read than most management books.

3. MARKETING STRATEGIES:

3.1) THE VALUE OF A GOOD PRODUCT

The key to success is a good product. Sure, substandard products exist and succeed, but they lack the staying power necessary to thrive. At the basis of J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter series is a good product. She created a time-honored story of the fallible hero and good versus evil that people have always loved.

Fundamental business truth: Creating a product to fulfill an existing need is far easier than creating a perceived need to fulfill the business objectives of an existing product.
3.2) THE COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT

The first Harry Potter book, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, was released in 1997 in Britain and a year later as *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* in the United States. This was a time when children were not spending their time reading. Instead, television and video games were the hobbies of choice for children. With those activities defining the cultural trends of society’s youth, it could be argued that Harry Potter had virtually no competition when the first book entered the struggling children’s book market. This assumption bears further investigation into the competitive and market environments of the literary world in the late 1990s.

3.3) SWOT Analysis:

The SWOT analysis is a fundamental marketing tool used early in the new product development process to gain a better understanding of the current business environmental impacts. SWOT is an acronym that stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. These are the four areas to be evaluated during this stage of early development to determine where a new product might fit in the market.
### SWOT diagram

**THE HARRY POTTER BRAND**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Easy Narrative</td>
<td>a) In product life cycle HP Brand is now in falling stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Customer participation in developing the HP Brand</td>
<td>b) Very ‘British’ story elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Strong consumer involvement</td>
<td>c) Fantasy literature was not popular.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Great source of entertainment for people of all ages.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Likeable author with compelling personal story</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Lack of competition from other brands.</td>
<td>a) Copycat books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Would translate well into a film</td>
<td>b) Story leaks over the course of the 7 book series.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Merchandising</td>
<td>c) Negative response to dark elements in the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Author has been compared to successful writers like Dahl.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A more detailed analysis of each element listed in the SWOT analysis.

**Strengths:**

- **Unique story:** The Harry Potter story was unlike others currently on the market. Certainly, J.K. Rowling’s book encompassed a variety of themes and plot lines that were not unique to literature as a whole, but the way she created her detailed story and characterizations in a magical world gave her product an immediate point of differentiation.

- **Appeals to children and adults:** The story was written for the children’s market, but adults were captivated by J.K. Rowling’s imaginative world, too. This would give Harry Potter a unique dual position in
the market.

- **Likable author with compelling personal history**: Promoting the Cinderella story of J.K. Rowling would bring added publicity to and interest in the Harry Potter book.
- **Series of seven books**: Readers would want to read more, extending the product lifecycle of the Harry Potter brand.

**Weaknesses:**

- **Book length**: At around 90,000 words, the first Harry Potter book was 50,000 words longer than typical children’s books. This may deter children, who generally have short attention spans, from reading it.
- **Series of seven books**: While a seven-book series can be a strength, it can also be a weakness. Children’s interests change rapidly, and they may not have the stamina or desire to stay loyal to a seven-book series. Maintaining the momentum of the series could be challenging.
- **Very “British” story elements**: Harry Potter’s story takes place in a British setting. The books refer to real British places, British foods, British activities and British words. That “very British” setting may not be understandable or interesting to readers in other parts of the world.
- **Fantasy literature was not currently popular**: In the late 1990s, fantasy literature was not selling well. It was possible that Harry Potter would go unnoticed, like so many other fantasy novels before it.

**Opportunities:**

- **Two audiences – children and adults**: Capturing two markets with one product would expand the market position of Harry Potter and provide increased potential for long-term success.
- **Would translate well to film**: The imagery and characterization in the first Harry Potter book would be a perfect match for the movies, which could provide an additional revenue stream.
Merchandising appropriate: The elements of Harry Potter would translate well to merchandise particularly since two markets would be available for that merchandise, children and adults.

Series of seven books allows perpetual marketing: Leveraging the future books through perpetual marketing where one element feeds off the next would generate excitement and a word-of-mouth buzz.

Author had been compared to successful writers like Roald Dahl: Prior to the release of the first Harry Potter book, other writers had seen success in the children’s and/or fantasy markets. Leveraging the steps they took to capitalize on their success would provide additional knowledge and experience to refine the marketing plan for Harry Potter.

Threats:

Copycat books: If Harry Potter became popular, other authors could quickly write similar stories, which may take market share from Harry Potter.

Story leaks over the course of the seven-book series: Part of the marketing opportunity related to the seven-book series was the potential use of perpetual and tease marketing. If later stories were leaked prior to the release of each book, those opportunities would be lost and sales would likely be negatively impacted.

Negative backlash related to dark or frightening elements of the story: It was possible that the story of Harry Potter could be deemed too scary for children. The characters and dangers Harry faces in the first book could be viewed negatively, which would hurt sales. Taking a close look at the SWOT analysis, it’s clear that Harry Potter was not originally positioned to be a global phenomenon.

On the contrary, the people behind the business of Harry Potter clearly saw both opportunities and threats. Ultimately, the people behind Harry Potter believed in the product as an inherently good one and felt they could overcome the threats and exploit the opportunities to achieve success.
3.4) Competitor Analysis

In addition to performing a SWOT analysis of the marketplace, it’s imperative that an in-depth competitor analysis be performed early in the product development process (and throughout the product’s lifecycle). Understanding the competitive marketplace is an integral part in developing a sound marketing plan. The box below provides a tool to help research the competitive marketplace for a new product such as Harry Potter in the late 1990s.

**Competitor analysis**

**Step 1: Identify competitors**
- Profile current competitors
- Profile potential competitors

**Step 2: Identify competitor strengths**
- Determine what the competitor has done well in the past or is doing well currently by examining:
  - Marketing
  - Products
  - Distribution
  - Financials
  - Technology
  - Corporate strategies

**Step 3: Identify competitor weaknesses**
- Examine where competitor is vulnerable
- Learn where competitor has failed in the past
- Determine where competitor can be attacked successfully

**Step 4: Identify competitor reactions**
- Determine how the competitor has reacted to new products or market changes in the past
- Examine how the competitor might react to a new product
- Create counter-offenses to predicted competitor reactions

Using a tool like this allowed the people behind the Harry Potter launch to paint a vivid picture of the competitive environment pre-release. Throughout the Harry Potter lifecycle, from its release in 1997 through to today, the marketing team constantly reviewed this analysis to ensure their product remained stronger than its competitors, particularly as it would relate to copycat stories that could potentially steal market share from Harry Potter. While the competition for Harry Potter was weak in 1997, others quickly saw the potential for success if they jumped on the Harry Potter bandwagon. The
marketing team needed to be aware of existing and impending threats from competition and proactively combat them.

3.5) BUILDING THE HARRY POTTER BRAND

a) **Brand Development**- Brown identifies ‘Narratives Method’ as a key success factor for the brand HP. With this he identifies storytelling as the management method of the moment. Having picked up one-word solutions (‘synergy’, ‘re-engineering’, 'disintermediation’) management has cast them aside as exhausted concepts. Having run the gamut of acronyms and mnemonics (TQM, CSR, 4Ps, 3Cs etc) the reality of the fog created has become apparent. Businesses and brands have been crying out for clarity and emotional engagement. Nothing supplies these qualities better than stories. So, belatedly, marketing has been discovering the fundamental power of parable, myth and narrative. In fact this factor may be considered as the most important S factor (SWOT) with HP.

From the very beginning, Rowling loved her character and the story she would create for him. That love for her product compelled her to bring a consistent brand message to consumers throughout nearly two decades. Many elements played into the success of Harry Potter over the years, but at the bottom of it all is J.K. Rowling acting as brand guardian, ensuring nothing is done to harm the Harry Potter brand in her eyes or the eyes of her fans. Helping Rowling along the way were other people who believed in Harry Potter. As marketers, we must work to create a good product, recognize when we have a good product, and sell that product by capitalizing on opportunities and taking calculated risks.

b) **Customer Loyalty**- Of course, readers also have contributed. Harry Potter has become part of their story too, and they have added to the development of the brand by evangelising for it. Readers formed an overwhelming sense of loyalty towards the product which can be explained through the 3 Ss of customer loyalty.

1. **Stability**: Customers are driven to emotional involvement in a product when that product (or brand) sends a consistent message
2. **Sustainability:** Customers are driven to emotional involvement in a product when they expect that product to be with them for a long time or at least a specific amount of time with a clear end.

3. **Security:** Customers are driven to emotional involvement in a product when that product gives them a feeling of comfort or peace of mind.

The process seems appropriately magical, a concept, management guru Brown believes is crucial for the future of branding. Other brands and brand managers will have to implement this concept of ‘Participation of the end-user in making a brand’, from Harry Potter. This is another important S factor with HP (See Exhibit – 2) 3S of consumer emotional involvement.
Emotion and the Relationship Grow Over Time
A BRAND IS BORN
3.6). Sales Promotion and Publicity:

CREATING AWARENESS AND DRIVING SALES

In the early days of the Harry Potter brand, Bloomsbury and Scholastic followed the typical advertising and promotional strategies that publishers employ for an author’s debut children’s novel. It’s a tried and true method of marketing books that includes sending galleys out in advance of publication to generate early reviews, sending complimentary review copies to newspapers and magazines and scheduling book signings, speaking engagements and media appearances by the author. The goal of these efforts is to create awareness of the new author’s work and generate early sales.

Each industry has its own tactics it uses to create awareness of a new product or brand, all with the goal of completing each of what I call the “seven steps of advertising success.” They are:

1. **Awareness**: Consumers move from an unaware state to being aware of a product or brand

2. **Recognition**: Consumers remember and associate a product or brand to a previous experience, for example an advertisement or promotion

3. **Interest**: Consumers become curious about a product or brand, leading them to ask questions or research it to learn more about it

4. **Purchase**: Consumers understand the product or brand enough to motivate them to buy it

5. **Repurchase**: Consumers are satisfied with the product or brand after their first purchase and are motivated to buy it again

6. **Loyalty**: Consumers are so satisfied with the product or brand that they buy it again and again, choosing it over other products or brands and potentially traveling to different locations to find it

7. **Influencer**: Loyal consumers are so satisfied with the product or brand that they are motivated to talk about it with others and promote the product through word-of-mouth marketing.
Tactics such as advertising, direct marketing, sales promotions, sponsorships, product placements, merchandising, public relations, word of-mouth marketing, exhibitions, viral marketing and more can be used in a variety of ways to market a product or brand. A new product developer or brand manager’s ultimate goal is not just to meet short term sales goals but to surpass them as well as long-term, stretch goals. Each step of the seven steps of advertising success builds on the step that precedes it until the ultimate goals are attained: achieving customer loyalty to the product or brand and converting loyal customers to influencers who become brand or product advocates and use word-of-mouth marketing to drive additional sales.

i) Marketing Hype –

Word of mouth marketing, rumours, Internet leaks, early release in some places, staged hush-up about what will happen, online buzz created.

The marketing team behind Harry Potter used a number of strategies and tactics to capitalize on the demands of the book, including:

- Advertising
- Direct marketing
- Sales promotions and contests
- Sponsorships
- Product placements
- Merchandising
- Publicity and personal appearances
- Word-of-mouth/viral marketing
- Exhibitions.
ii) **There were also some unique Harry Potter advertising and promotional tactics:**

- To promote the fourth book in the United States, airplanes carrying banners that read “*Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* Read it Now!” flew over the beaches of Long Island, New York, the Jersey Shore, New Jersey; Los Angeles, California; Chicago, Illinois and Hilton Head, South Carolina.
- For the launch of the sixth book, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, over 2,000 buses throughout the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland carried advertisements that read, “All Aboard for Harry.”
- In 2007, Scholastic created a purple triple-decker bus representing the Knight Bus, which first appeared in the third book. The Knight Bus traveled across the United States and visited 37 libraries to promote the release of the final book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*.

iii). **RELATIONSHIP MARKETING**

By definition, a relationship brand is one that relies on experience. Relationship marketing, therefore, could be considered to be the process of creating awareness and sales of a product or brand to a mass audience who is given the opportunity to experience that brand on an individual basis. In other words, each customer is given the opportunity to experience the brand in his or her own way and develop his or her own feelings and emotional involvement with it. Automobile brands provide a useful example of relationship brands. Car buyers often become highly loyal to an automobile brand once they have an opportunity to experience and personalize that brand. **Strong feelings for a brand like Mercedes drive customers to repeatedly purchase the brand,** simply moving up within the brand’s line of products but not buying outside that brand. **The Harry Potter brand leveraged relationship marketing from the beginning.**

Customers developed a strong loyalty to the Harry Potter brand and a deep emotional involvement with it, with little to no marketing effort. Rather, the Harry Potter product was an inherently good one, which invited customers to develop an emotional attachment to it. With J.K. Rowling working as **brand guardian** and ensuring the brand message was consistent, consumers felt secure enough with the brand to allow that emotional connection and brand loyalty to develop, thereby giving the brand value. The marketing
team successfully tapped into and exploited the emotional triggers consumers felt towards the Harry Potter brand. Rowling’s books fulfilled a basic need people had for a good story with a variety of emotional elements, including:

- Good triumphs over evil
- Trust and security in friendships and relationships
- Love never dies
- Acceptance despite diversity
- Fight prejudice
- For adults – tap into the child within us thereby fulfilling a longing for childhood or allowing us to relive our childhoods.

iv) WORD-OF-MOUTH MARKETING TACTICS LEADING TO ‘POTTERMANIA’

The build-up to the launch of the last book started almost from the release of book 6, when JK Rowling confirmed #7 would be the final chapter. As the date got closer and closer, the frenzy reached an almost feverish pitch. Book stores scheduled all night Potter Parties and fans of all ages reserved their books for immediate midnight or next morning purchase.

Then we got the inevitable leaks, early releases, threats of lawsuits, etc. What's fascinating is how much this whole phenomenon fed into the marketing machine that has grown up around this craze. Front page stories focused on whether the excerpts posted on the website were in fact real or incorrect versions. The publisher threatened not only those who posted the book early but websites, publishers, stores, etc. who were in any way involved in premature release of the book.

The big question was whether Harry lives or dies at the end of the final book. Here's the interesting part. Now that the release has come and gone so has that big question. Most of the mainstream sites, papers, etc. I've seen have *NOT* posted the book's ending now
that it's publicly available. Those that have reviewed the book have done so in a way that does not give away the conclusion.

So the big frenzy about the big ending was only important as long as it was a mystery. Now that millions of copies of the book are available it's no longer news. But until then, it was a great story that ensured there was virtually no one in the free world who didn't know about the book's release Fri at midnight. It probably sold thousands and thousands of additional books. In other words, the threatened early release was the best marketing publisher Scholastic could have asked for.

This ingenious multi-pronged approach towards creating such huge marketing hype will certainly be copied in future by other brands.

- **Consumer oriented SP** – Contest of Biggest fan, signed book, chance to interact with author
- **Trade Oriented SP** – POP Displays, Book Launch Festival
- **Sale of Merchandise**

v) **ONLINE RETAILERS: PRICE DISCOUNTING, MARKETING TIE-INS AND DISTRIBUTION STRATEGIES**

By the time *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* was released in 2000, Harry Potter had generated a massive, loyal fan following of people who were deeply involved with the character, product and brand. The online buzz soared as customers across the globe anxiously waited for the next book in the Harry Potter series. Everyone wanted to get their hands on *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. Scholastic took advantage of consumer demand by artificially limiting the supply of the fourth Harry Potter book. In turn, Amazon and Barnes & Noble responded by offering pre-orders through their website, guaranteeing that customers who pre-ordered their copies of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* would receive them on the release date. Customers who feared a copy
might not be waiting for them at their local bookstores responded by pre-ordering over 700,000 copies prior to the 8 July 2000 release date.

The table below gives the pre-order statistics for books four through seven in the Harry Potter series.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pre-ordered</th>
<th>First-day sales copies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire</td>
<td>760,000</td>
<td>1.4 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix</td>
<td>1.4 million</td>
<td>6.8 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince</td>
<td>1.5 million</td>
<td>9 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows</td>
<td>2.2 million</td>
<td>11 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Amazon and Barnes & Noble benefited immensely from the pre-order strategy which positively affected their net revenues.

By the time the final book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, was released in 2007, pre-orders had grown to over 2 million copies. The competition between online retailers to capture market share from one another grew heated as Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Borders and Wal-Mart tried to draw Harry Potter fans to their websites. Amazon was the first online retailer to implement a price **discounting strategy**. Acting as loss-leader, Amazon offered pre-ordered books at deeply discounted prices in order to drive traffic to its website. **Selling the Harry Potter books at 40–50 percent off the suggested retail price was a bold strategy for Amazon who chose not to generate revenue directly from Harry Potter book sales but rather from the other products customers would hopefully buy while making their Harry Potter book purchases on Amazon’s website.**
Marketing tie-ins and additional savings opportunities were developed to differentiate one online retailer from another. For example, Amazon began offering free shipping of Harry Potter pre-orders. With the release of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Amazon created a complete promotional strategy to generate pre-orders by offering the final book at 50 percent off the suggested retail price with free guaranteed release date shipping and a **$5 gift certificate** for the customer to use with any $20 order during the following month. Additionally, Amazon presented other products on the site’s Harry Potter pre-order pages that would hopefully interest customers and generate additional sales.

To top off its marketing strategy for *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* pre-orders, Amazon held an online contest to find the “Harryest” town in America. The winner would be the city with the highest number of pre-orders per capita, and that city (Falls Church, Virginia) would receive a $5,000 charitable donation to a nonprofit group serving the town’s residents. Amazon’s strategy worked as the company’s pre-orders increased more than 500 percent on the first day the book was offered in December 2006, and the final Harry Potter book landed at the top of the bestseller list six months before its July 2007 release date.

vi) BRICK-AND-MORTAR BOOKSELLERS: PRICE DISCOUNTING, MARKETING TIE-INS AND PROMOTIONAL EVENTS

As the popularity of the Harry Potter brand increased and retailers clamored to create new ways to acquire market share in the already highly competitive literary market, independent brick-and-mortar booksellers faced a growing challenge. Online retailers such as Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Borders were able to deeply discount the prices for Harry Potter books to drive pre-orders. The same strategy was used by mass retailers in their brick-and-mortar locations when a new Harry Potter book was released.
However, to remain competitive in the cutthroat Harry Potter book market, smaller retail outlets had to find ways to compete other than deep discounts. In fact, differentiation through marketing promotions and tactics became a critical part of most booksellers’ strategies. Both large and small book retailers used *promotional displays* to draw attention to the newest Harry Potter book as well as *tie-in products such as previous Harry Potter releases in print and audio, Harry Potter-related books, Harry Potter DVDs, Harry Potter merchandise, similar literary works, gift items and so on*. Mass retailers saw customers purchasing not just the newest Harry Potter book but also spending time and money in their cafés and browsing bookshelves for other items. Alternatively, in the United Kingdom, Waterstone’s gave a free copy of *Lionboy* by Zizou Corder to 250,000 customers who purchased the new Harry Potter book. As *Lionboy* is the first book in a trilogy, Waterstone’s hoped the tie-in freebie would encourage future sales for the next two books or similar children’s books. Smaller retailers offered Harry Potter *memorabilia* with the purchase of the newest Harry Potter book or *coupons for future purchases*. Brick-and-mortar bookstores also used *contests and promotions* of varying sizes to generate store traffic and publicity around the newest Harry Potter book release. From small *sweepstakes* where entrants could win free books or merchandise to larger scale contests, retailers looked for ways to differentiate themselves from the competition. For example, in 2000, to promote the release of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, 50,000 people throughout the United States entered *Barnes & Noble’s Harry Potter IV contest* at participating Barnes & Noble, Bookstop and Bookstar brick-and-mortar locations. The winner received a *four-day, three-night trip for four to London, which was promoted as a chance to visit a location near the home of Harry Potter*. The most famous aspect of brick-and-mortar booksellers’ marketing strategies came in the form of *special events*. Book *signings* at larger locations grew steadily over the 10-year lifespan of the seven Harry Potter books, with crowds growing to eventually reach well into the thousands. Perhaps the most famous promotional event took the form of *midnight release parties* which began with the simultaneous midnight release of the
fourth book in the Harry Potter series in 2000. Parties grew bigger and bigger with each new Harry Potter book release. Fans and bookstore employees arrived in costumes and special activities were held during the parties, including mock sortings into the four houses of the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, face painting, games, live entertainment, giveaways, parades and so on.

4. THE ONLINE BUZZ

Fan websites, chat rooms, forums and magazines began growing like wildfire online. Everyone had something to say about the previous Harry Potter books, and everyone had speculations about the next three books and the movie franchise. Once Warner Bros sold the merchandising rights for Harry Potter, fans had another topic to discuss and more products to buy to satiate their desire for all things Harry Potter. Everyone wanted to know what would happen to Harry Potter, and the internet provided an outlet for a strong virtual social network to evolve. When Warner Bros launched its website on 15 February 2001 to promote the first movie, it took just 40 days for fans to post approximately 10,000 messages on the site’s discussion boards.

Initially, the team behind Harry Potter reacted negatively to fan websites, but J.K. Rowling, Bloomsbury, Scholastic and Warner Bros learned quickly to allow fans to love the brand interactively through their own online community rather than try to stop them with lawsuits claiming copyright infringement. They saw the power of the viral buzz and word-of-mouth marketing it created, and after initial reservations and early lawsuits (which they dropped), they ultimately decided to let the brand grow of its own free will.
5. MERCHANDISING HARRY POTTER

Merchandising is the process of creating products related to a specific brand. Typically, a brand will be licensed to other companies who will manufacture, promote and sell products based on that brand. The licensee will pay the licensor a fee for merchandising rights, and usually, the licensor will receive a percentage of sales from the licensed merchandise. The theory behind merchandising is that products will sell better with a popular branded image or likes of them than without the brand affiliation. It acts as a form of advertising by increasing awareness and recognition of a brand.

When Warner Bros obtained the licensing rights for the Harry Potter brand, it surely saw dollar signs. Under J.K. Rowling’s protective eye, Warner Bros set out to sell those merchandising rights to various manufacturers and companies who would then extend the Harry Potter brand. The Coca-Cola Company won the right to tie its products in with the Harry Potter movies with a bid of $150 million and an agreement to meet Rowling’s demands related to the Harry Potter brand. First, it was required to donate money to various community projects as well as $18 million to Reading is Fundamental (a charity in the United States that encourages literacy in children). Second, no Coca-Cola products were allowed to appear in the Harry Potter movies, contrary to typical movie/product tie-in agreements, and Coca-Cola was prohibited from using any images from the Harry Potter books or movies in the company’s own promotions. These requirements assured J.K. Rowling that the Harry Potter brand would not be diluted through overexposure by Coca-Cola.

In addition to securing a company to tie in its products with the Harry Potter movies, Warner Bros signed contracts with dozens of other companies to manufacture Harry Potter branded merchandise. A diverse group of companies purchased licensing rights to the Harry Potter brand, including Electronic Arts, LEGO, Mattel, Hasbro, Gund, Tonner Doll Company, Whirlwood Magic Wands, The Noble...
Collection (a collectibles manufacturer), Neca (manufacturer of action figures, toys and so on) and many more.

In keeping with the marketing strategy to leave customers wanting more of the Harry Potter brand, the team behind Harry Potter cleverly ensured that the market was not saturated with Harry Potter merchandise. There is a subtle difference between inundating the market with merchandise and using the laws of supply and demand to your advantage. **The team behind the Harry Potter brand leveraged Rowling’s desire to ensure Harry Potter was not overmerchandised, and turned it into a unique marketing tactic.** As evidenced, it’s estimated that there are approximately 400 official Harry Potter products on the market. This is not a lot for a brand that’s been around for 10 years. Harry Potter was not the biggest licensing property in 2004. Instead, *Spider-Man 2* and *Shrek 2* merchandise topped the charts.

**BOX 8.1 Examples of Harry Potter merchandise**

- **Toys:**
  - Action figures
  - Plush dolls
  - Play sets
  - LEGO
  - Wands
  - Broomsticks
  - Kites
  - Puzzles

- **Games:**
  - Board games
  - Trading cards
  - Video games
  - Chess sets

- **Clothing:**
  - T-shirts
  - Pajamas
  - Jackets
  - Pants
  - Shirts
  - Scarves
  - Ties
  - Costumes
UNIQUE HARRY POTTER MERCHANDISING EFFORTS

Harry Potter brand extensions and merchandising efforts have evolved in a variety of forms. For example, several travel companies offer tours throughout the United Kingdom with visits to locations mentioned in the Harry Potter books and movies as well as to buildings and landscapes actually shown in the Harry Potter movies. From the British Tourist Authority who offers guide maps to locations filmed.

5.1) AUDIO BOOKS, DVDS, SOUNDTRACKS AND VIDEO GAMES IN THE MERCHANDISING AND BRAND EXTENSION MIX

DVD sales represent an important revenue stream for Warner Bros and the teams behind the Harry Potter brand. Not only do DVDs of popular movies rent and sell extremely well, but they also offer another way for the brand to be marketed, thereby reaching different (and hopefully new) audiences. *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* held the Guinness World Record for the fastest selling DVD of all time. To further extend DVD sales, the marketing team behind the Harry Potter brand developed a variety of packaging and merchandise tie-in concepts. DVDs included bonus features and sneak peaks and could be purchased in single disc packages or special two-disc sets with more special features and interactive games. The first Harry Potter DVD, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*, could be found packaged individually or with a plush troll doll representing a character in the movie.

**record** - The first five audio books in the Harry Potter series sold a breaking 4 million copies in North America. Similarly, the Harry Potter soundtracks have sold millions of copies around the world.
Video games also make up a vital component of the Harry Potter brand. Electronic Arts is responsible for creating video games to coincide with each film in the Harry Potter series, but J.K. Rowling has been closely involved in the development of each game and must approve all aspects of every game. Her tight control as brand guardian ensures that Harry Potter games remain consistent with the brand image she created and fans expect. Electronic Arts manufactured two stand-alone video games called Harry Potter: Quidditch World Cup and LEGO Creator: Harry Potter. DVD games included PlayStation, Xbox, GameBoy and more.

6) Marketing Films: To promote the first Harry Potter movie, Warner Bros looked for ways to fuel the ongoing buzz about the Harry Potter brand. Tease and perpetual marketing tactics were used to feed off the word-of-mouth marketing that was already happening organically. The strategy focused on leaving consumers wanting more by slowly releasing bits of information. Shortly after Warner Bros launched its website to promote *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*, it released the first trailer for the movie via satellite on 29 February 2001.

When the film was finally released in November 2001, the anticipation level was extremely high. The release was supported with $40 million in marketing efforts including television ads, radio spots, press inserts, billboards, website freebies, promotional giveaways and the Times Square Jumbotron in New York City. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* opened on a record-breaking 3,672 screens in the United States. The movie broke the first-day ticket sales record, bringing in $31 million. As of 2007, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* remains the fourth highest grossing film of all time behind *Titanic*, *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* and *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man’s Chest*. As new books in the series were released, promotions for both the movies and the books would bolster the buzz.

Attaching a trailer to the end of another Warner Bros film approximately six months before the next Harry Potter film would be released became a key tactic to not only drive
word-of-mouth marketing for the next film in the series, but also to generate increased ticket sales for another Warner Bros film.

Warner Bros also focused promotional efforts around the world premieres and widespread releases of each film. Contests, cast interviews and promotional appearances became an expected part of each Harry Potter movie release. By maintaining momentum around the Harry Potter brand and teasing consumers with bits of information released over time, fans were always left wanting more. As a result, word-of-mouth marketing and the online buzz grew of its own free will and drove sales more than Bloomsbury, Scholastic and Warner Bros could have ever hoped for (see box)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worldwide box office receipts for the first five Harry Potter movies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone: $976.5 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets: $879.0 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban: $795.5 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire: $896.0 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix: $936.3 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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7) The Hype Continues

Although the final Harry Potter book has been published, the character continues to live online. Fans keep Harry Potter alive through fan fiction, fan sites, fan art and so on. In November 2007, a website emerged touting an eighth book in the Harry Potter series, James Potter and the Hall of Elder’s Crossing. Immediately, the internet was flooded with conversations about a possible new book in the Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling. It turned out that the book is a work of fan fiction by George Lippert who wrote it for his wife and children and offered it free through a website he created. The fervor around Lippert’s work demonstrated the ongoing popularity of the Harry Potter brand online long after J.K. Rowling completed her story about the boy wizard.
Rowling’s first post-Harry Potter release was an illustrated collection of magical stories called *The Tales of Beedle the Bard*, of which only seven copies were printed. Six copies were given away as gifts, and one was auctioned by Sotheby’s on 13 December 2007, with a starting price of $62,000, to raise money for a children’s charity that J.K. Rowling co-founded, The Children’s Voice. The auction copy was purchased for $4 million by Amazon.com. Additionally, J.K. Rowling is reportedly working on two other books, at least one of which is targeted toward an adult audience, and Rowling has mentioned that she expects the next book she will publish will be for children.

7.1) **HARRY POTTER AS THE PIONEER BRAND AND THE LIKELIHOOD OF SIMILAR SUCCESSES**

The Harry Potter brand is the leader in its market, but it didn’t start out that way. Initially, J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter series was compared to the work of Roald Dahl and other well-known fantasy writers before her. As time went on and the Harry Potter brand grew in popularity and strength, a shift occurred where J.K. Rowling moved from her status as follower to that of leader, and the Harry Potter brand became the pioneer brand. A **pioneer brand is the first to market and typically the leader of that market.**

As the pioneer brand, the Harry Potter series benefits from its position as the **first to market and the advantages that go with that position.** Marketing theories on order of entry and relative market share tell us that the pioneer brand will naturally have the **largest market share.** Consumers experience the pioneer brand first, and it’s difficult for later market entrants to steal market share from that dominant brand. Naturally, the pioneer brand sets the standard for the category in consumers’ minds, and products introduced subsequently are compared to it. **The pioneering advantage theory tells us that even if two products are identical in all respects, including price, the pioneer brand will always have**
a higher market share simply because consumers are familiar with it and prefer not to deviate from their comfort zones. Authors and publishers who try to emulate the success of Harry Potter will be fighting against the experiences that people have enjoyed with the pioneer brand and comparisons to it.

7.2) LATE ENTRANT STRATEGIES

- How can late entrants to the cross-over fantasy genre compete against Harry Potter?

Research has shown that even long after a pioneer brand has left the market, consumers still prefer it to late entrants. As the pioneer brand, Harry Potter benefits from preemptive positioning, meaning that simply because Harry Potter is first, later entrants need to find different ways to position their products within the category to achieve success similar to Harry Potter. Using the theory of preemptive positioning, we’re told that later entrants who use a copycat approach by mirroring their product to the pioneer brand will actually drive more sales for the pioneer brand versus their own brands. Instead, later entrants need to focus on differentiating their brands and products from the pioneer brand (also called the market leader) to give consumers a reason to choose those brands and products over the pioneer brand that they have already experienced and are comfortable with. Choosing a new product and brand, even a new book, requires an investment in consumers’ time and money. Later entrants need to reduce the risk associated with the trial phase, by clearly communicating the differences in their brands as well as the benefits to consumers.

One advantage later entrants have in the literary world is consumers are always looking for new books to read. With no additional Harry Potter books scheduled for release in the future, fans have a void that needs to be filled. However, those fans have a significant emotional involvement in the pioneer brand, and matching the success of Harry Potter will not be an easy feat.

Two main strategies have been discussed here that later entrants could follow to achieve success like the pioneer brand they will compete against:
1. **Differentiation (market follower):** The easiest and least costly strategy for a late entrant to follow would be to compare a new book series directly to Harry Potter. Many marketers have already used this strategy by hyping books as “the next Harry Potter” or authors as “the next J.K. Rowling,” but these comparisons raise the bar of consumers’ expectations and often create the opposite of the desired effect by increasing market share for the market leader. Rather than a direct comparison, a more effective strategy would be to differentiate the new book and brand as similar to Harry Potter but just different enough to bring added value to consumers. Fans have already read the Harry Potter books, and they don’t necessarily want a copycat of their beloved pioneer brand, but a strategy of positioning a late entrant just far enough from the pioneer brand will bring the balance of familiarity and differentiation that consumers desire.

2. **Reinventing the category (market challenger):** Naturally, every brand has weaknesses, even a pioneer brand. The strategy of market challengers suggests that rather than imitating the pioneer brand, later entrants can promote their products as completely different from the leader. This strategy requires a larger investment in advertising and promotion to build brand awareness, but it also attacks the pioneer brand’s weaknesses. Even loyal Harry Potter fans have areas of J.K. Rowling’s books or movies that left them feeling unsatisfied. Tapping into those unfulfilled needs and exploiting them might be a riskier strategy than the differentiation strategy of market followers described above, but if effective, it could be successful. The strategy chosen by future authors and publishers will depend on their long-term goals for the new book and brand. If simply following the pioneer brand is the goal, then differentiation will suffice. If duplicating or surpassing the
success of J.K. Rowling is the goal, then innovation is the key. In choosing between these two strategies lies the risk of creating a fad versus a trend. Fads come and go, but trends have staying power. To recreate the longevity experienced by the Harry Potter brand, authors and publishers will need to find ways to keep the brand in front of consumers through brand extensions and perpetual marketing as well as through integrated marketing strategies.

7.3) POTENTIAL MARKET FOLLOWERS AND MARKET CHALLENGERS

Already publishers and marketers are promoting other authors and books as successors to J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter series. Press releases and reviews are teeming with phrases like ‘‘the next J.K. Rowling’’ and ‘‘If you liked Harry Potter, you’ll love this.’’ Who are these authors and books that are being compared to the literary phenomenon of J.K. Rowling and Harry Potter? In this section, we’ll examine a few of those authors and their current or potential future marketing strategies.

**Eoin Colfer’s Artemis Fowl Series**

**Eoin Colfer** is an Irish writer best known for his *Artemis Fowl* series of fantasy novels for children and young adults. The first book in Colfer’s *Artemis Fowl* series was published in 2001 and was an instant success and bestseller. Eoin Colfer has often been compared to J.K. Rowling, and his *Artemis Fowl* series has been compared to Harry Potter because his writing style is said to be similar to J.K. Rowling’s in terms of injecting humor into a dark plot. Colfer published five books in the *Artemis Fowl* series between 2001 and 2006. With the successive release of five books in a linear, chronological series within a six-year period and similar writing techniques to J.K. Rowling’s proven style, it seems that Eoin Colfer’s Artemis Fowl
series would have been a perfect choice for a **differentiation strategy** as a market follower. The opportunities for **tease and perpetual marketing** were in place, and the linear nature of the series would invite emotional involvement from readers. A marketing strategy that promotes these features and leverages social media marketing through the blogosphere and similar online social networking could still help boost Colfer’s *Artemis Fowl* series to a cult brand. In other words, it’s not too late to generate a buzz. Consider this, the buzz around the Harry Potter series did not reach a frenzy until the movie deal was announced and the fourth book was published. Certainly, word-of-mouth marketing had driven the first three books to the bestseller list, but Harry Potter did not become a phenomenon until approximately 2000, three years after the first book was released in Britain. Clearly, the opportunity to drive the *Artemis Fowl* series to a cult brand still exists with adequate targeted marketing.

8) **COMPARISON OF BRAND HP WITH OTHER FANTASY NOVELS:**

*In a hole in the ground lived a hobbit."

When Oxford professor **John Ronald Reuel (J.R.R.) Tolkien** wrote those words on a blank page he caught generations of readers with his fanciful stories. That sentence formed the foundation of a modestly successful book called *The Hobbit*, which in turn became the springboard for a worldwide sensation known as *The Lord of the Rings*. *The Lord of the Rings* was published as three books during the mid-1950s, almost 20 years after the publication of *The Hobbit*. To date it has sold more than 100 million copies in over 40 languages worldwide. The film, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, from the first book in the series, grossed US$ 860 million worldwide and spawned a slew of merchandise, including toys, games and tie-in books. December 2003 saw the release of the adaptation of the third book, *The Return of the King*.

Ironically, Tolkien scorned movies and television. Growing up in an idyllic English countryside town called Sarehole, he didn't have much use for industrialization and loved nature (one character in his oeuvre is actually a talking, walking tree). Those attitudes
come through clearly in *The Lord of the Rings*, wherein the War of the Ring heralds the beginning of the Age of Man and the end of magic. The evil orcs and goblins that attack the novel's heroes destroy the beauty of Middle-Earth, the land in which the story is set, and create awful machines of destruction. As more and more wilderness becomes shopping malls and housing developments, it's easy to see how Tolkien's attitudes continue to resonate with readers.

Not only did the book capture the imaginations of readers all over the world, but it also influenced the modern fantasy movement in the publishing world. While Tolkien didn't originally intend for *The Lord of the Rings* to appear as a trilogy, that format has become common in the genre. Many fantasy writers acknowledge inspiration from *The Lord of the Rings*, and epic quests as well as elves, dwarves, orcs, and other creatures, litter the genre.

In addition to the current series of films, *The Lord of the Rings* was also adapted into an animated film.

Even though *The Lord of the Rings* brand enjoys a healthy resurgence at the moment thanks to current movie releases, it still faces some magical competition from a young upstart named Harry Potter,. While *The Lord of the Rings* tends to appeal to an older audience than Harry Potter, the two share plenty of fans, in addition to their use of wizards, goblins, trolls and magic, among other common fantasy tropes.

But will *The Lord of the Rings* live forever as a major brand? Probably not. The merchandise onslaught will die down after *The Return of the King* plays in theaters and has its obligatory DVD release, and *The Lord of the Rings* will likely retreat to its own little niche again, snug as a hobbit in its hobbit hole. However, HP seems to add new customers and remain in the heart of the audience for years to come till such time a newer successful brand dislodges it from its peak.

**Christopher Paolini**

Christopher Paolini is an American writer best known for his debut novel, *Eragon*, the first book in his Inheritance trilogy which also includes *Eldest* and a still untitled third book. Christopher Paolini began writing *Eragon* at age 15 simply because he wanted to write a book he would like to read. In 2002, his debut novel was self-published and promoted through a series of appearances by Paolini at schools and libraries. At one of
those promotional appearances, *Eragon* fell into the hands of the stepson of Carl Hiaasen (an American novelist) who showed it to his stepfather, who in turn told his publisher, Alfred Knopf, about the book and how much he enjoyed it. Alfred Knopf purchased the rights to *Eragon* and the entire Inheritance trilogy and published a new edition of *Eragon* in 2003, catapulting Paolini onto the *New York Times* bestseller list at just 19 years of age.

The second book in the Inheritance trilogy, *Eldest*, was released in 2005. *Eragon* was adapted to the big screen and released on 15 December 2006. Unfortunately, the movie did not live up to the audience’s expectations and was panned by critics. The book and movie suffered from negative criticism related to the similarities to the plots of other popular works, including *Star Wars* and *The Lord of the Rings*, as well as the simple resolutions to the problems encountered by characters. A corresponding video game was released by Stormfront Studios in 2006, and the movie was released on DVD in 2007.

Rather than fueling the hype around the brand and drawing in new readers, the movie may have driven new customers away. *Eragon* grossed $249 million worldwide, bringing in $23.2 million in its opening weekend but dropping off by 70 percent the following weekend. The film was the tenth worst reviewed film of 2006, which undoubtedly added to the dramatic decline in ticket sales. It’s interesting to consider whether more favorable movie reviews would have continued to fuel the perpetual marketing of the Inheritance series and given it a chance to grow in popularity similar to the growth in the Harry Potter buzz.
None have reached the frenzied fandom known to J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter series. What set J.K. Rowling apart from her predecessors? It appears that three main factors differentiate Rowling’s Harry Potter series to those by other authors in similar genres:

1. **A linear series**: The chronological nature and single main story arc of the seven Harry Potter books, clearly articulated by J.K. Rowling from the onset of Harry’s journey, not only left fans wanting more and feeling emotionally connected to the story and characters but also allowed the marketing teams behind the brand to leverage tease and perpetual marketing.

2. **Limiting brand extensions**: As brand guardian, J.K. Rowling allowed the Harry Potter brand to be extended but only in ways she controlled, thereby retaining the brand’s image and reducing the potential for saturating the market and diluting the brand.

3. **Word-of-mouth marketing**: The internet and social networking allowed the buzz about the Harry Potter brand to grow to a historic level.
9) FUTURE PROSPECTS:

a) There is no serious competition from other brands. Hence new entrants will be attracted towards the HP brand. Considering a population growth rate of 2%, there is huge scope even today. An important aspect of the Harry Potter brand has been navigating between the risks of it becoming a short-term fad or a long-term, sustainable brand. The longevity of the Harry Potter brand will hinge on J.K. Rowling’s control over future extensions or additions to the brand. As long as these enhance the brand’s image and don’t saturate the market, fans will still want more Harry Potter, thereby extending the life of the brand indefinitely.

b) On 31 May 2007, Warner Bros and Universal signed a 10-year licensing agreement, with the option for two five-year renewal periods, giving Universal City Development Partners the right to build a Harry Potter theme park at Universal Orlando Resort in Orlando, Florida. Universal set aside a budget of $230–$265 million to build The Wizarding World of Harry Potter with a release date scheduled on 30 June 2010.

c) Film adaptation of the seventh and final book—Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows is currently under production. The film is to be split into two parts. Part I due to release in November 2010 and part II in July 2011.

10) RECOMMENDATIONS:

a) The campaign should continue at a moderate level to attract new generation of readers b) Other forms e.g. a TV serial can be started. Since the film could not cover all details a TV serial will certainly be a
great success.

c) Theme park suited for global fans across nations

d) Earth-bound quidditch. Game to be adopted into school sports curricula

e) Story telling by experts on radio channels

11) CONCLUSION:

HP can be a source of inspiration to all the persons engaged in the field of management for several reasons. Management jargons are no more important; it is the principles behind it that are important. The methods adopted to create a new brand are most ingenious. A multi-pronged marketing approach is needed. I have identified five main factors to recreating the success of Harry Potter:

1. A good product
2. Emotional involvement
3. Word-of-mouth marketing and an online buzz
4. Tease and perpetual marketing
5. Brand consistency and restraint

When the lifecycle of one brand comes to an end, another brand is always in the wings waiting to take the lead. Harry Potter will be around for many years to come thanks to movies, theme parks and possibly more, but the market and consumers are waiting for the next big thing to claim the top spot in the literary world. The doors to success stand before us. Who will unlock those doors and step through them first remains to be seen.
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HARRY POTTER AND THE BRAND THAT LIVED.

THE MARKETING STRATEGY OF HARRY POTTER

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