

An Essay: Transmedia Worlds with a focus on Nostalgia Marketing - Care Bears

In today's fast paced world, moving content across media is an inevitable step most entertainment franchises make to ensure longevity and success of their products. Transmedia storytelling is a result of the emergence of revolutionary technology, not for the sake of technology, but because of its contribution to developing entertaining content. Also, to pander to low retention rate and the insatiable instant gratification most contemporary audiences would yearn for.

Compelling and profitable transmedia experiences exploit all media avenues to preserve creative control that govern characters and the environments they reside in. Additionally, extrapolate beyond their introductory medium to promote 'larger than life' consumption. Take the example of the Care Bears Franchise, a brainchild of American Greetings in 1981. These adorable little furry friends captivated the audiences in the 1980's to become superstars in their own right.

Probably one of the earliest to foray into transmedia storytelling, the Care Bears were quick to feature as toys, in movies, television, publishing and audio beside their usual greeting card appearances. In an attempt to ride the technology revolution, they have established fair online presence to provide interactive games and quizzes – 'Bear Pairs' and 'Happy Hearts' to name a few.

In my opinion, the Care Bears franchise can further its ability to delight the public via sustained nostalgia marketing to leverage their franchise product. A majority of video-game patrons fall into the middle-aged male category. With a potential target segment of middle aged parents willing to coddle their new born; wrapping up modern conveniences in old-style packaging indicative of warm memories of the past holds the key to customer wallets. In reality, one of those memories from childhood for today's parents that they want to replicate for their kids too.

Nostalgia marketing is based on the premise that while young, people live on dreams and when they are old, they live on memories. It is a well-known story that Volkswagen, Pepsi, Maxwell House and other multinational companies have been very successful by exploiting the fond memories older consumers have for various products. To apply the same principle for a product line such as the Care Bears would be prudent.

How about a 3d immersive 'Classic' Care Bears game targeted as gender indiscriminate to collect hearts and spread love? 'Classic' Care Bears reflect the look and tummy symbols as they appeared 20 years ago. To have them take center stage and maybe feature Beastley as the villain who comes in to wreak occasional havoc and detract their attempts. Eventually, milk the most out of this franchise only to come up with a sequel featuring the all 'New' Care Bears – ones with redesigned colored paws and foot pads for each character; And their adventures replete with different plots and symbols.

On a more subliminal level, mankind resides in an increasingly risky and uncertain environment. People are less likely to trust politicians and scientists, there's been a breakdown of traditional order, there are more divorces and more single-person households. Nostalgia Marketing takes advantage of the fact that people are holding on to things which remind them of the past to try to reduce the risks of the environment and get some sort of control. Much like fashion for retro that stems from a sense of nostalgia for a golden time of culture in the past.

Thus, transforming consumer symbols like the Care Bears into icons that can self-sustain as well as promote their product independent of media through which it is being dispatched.

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