Gabriella Axelson

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Trans-media Case Study

Pippi Longstocking

Overview:

Pippi Longstocking started out as a book by Swedish author Astrid Lindgren. She originally wrote the book for her then nine-year-old daughter who was home sick from school one day. After many attempts to get it published, *Pippi Longstocking* was finally released in 1945. Two more chapter books were published by 1948, and multiple shorter picture books published in 1969-1975. The last two Pippi Longstocking books were published in 1979 and 2000. Due to the books wide popularity, Pippi Longstocking has been translated into 70 different languages. Furthermore, the wide popularity has lead to multiple movie adaptations and television shows. The character Pippi Longstocking is a nine-year-old girl who exhibits super-strength (she is able to lift up her horse with one-hand), unconventional ways. In most of her stories, Pippi questions and makes fun of unreasonable and condescending adults. Her unconventional ways are due to being daughter of a buccaneer captain and living alone with her pet horse (Lilla Gubben / Little Old Man) and monkey (Herr / Mr. Nelson). Because of these backstories, Pippi Longstocking tells the story of how anyone can do whatever they want, no matter who they are, and in a way, begins teaching about feminism. Little girls, for example, can be just as strong as boys and play boy games. Boys can also partake in games that might be considered girly. Yet no matter one’s gender and age, they can accomplish whatever they set their minds to. Furthermore, Pippi shows kids it is okay to be young and childish, and to not be judgmental and unreasonable like some adults. An example of how this is done is through the example of Tommy and Annika, whom accept Pippi’s quirky ways, unlike most of the adults who treat her like an outcast for her lack of education and unusual way of life. Therefore, Pippi Longstocking does not limit its audiences to only girls or only boys, nor to only one age, but to everyone of any age and gender.

Audience:

Although Pippi Longstocking could be argued as a brand that has no specific audience due to it being relative to anyone, it does have the target audience of younger school aged female children. This is largely due to the fact that Pippi, the main character and protagonist, is a female. However, male school aged children can still be included as the target audience since Pippi exhibits boy-ish qualities—her super-strength, pet horse and monkey, adventures she goes on, as well as the character Tommy, allow for boys to relate to this story. This target audience, however, does not exclude anyone from a certain sex, race, nor economic status. Race is not a part of the target audience because it is not a part of the stories, and although the main-characters are all white, the morals and teachings of the stories are relevant to anyone and everyone. Similarly, one’s economic status does not necessarily exclude them from the target audience of Pippi Longstocking, however it might prohibit them if they do not have access to the books, television, or movies. It should also be noted that because the books and movies can be found in a wide range of languages, the target audience only excludes those who do not speak the seventy languages the books and movies are published in.

Examples:

* Books: Pippi Longstocking was first introduced as a chapter book, which is where it gained its popularity. Because of this growing popularity, Pippi Longstocking was translated in to multiple other languages which continued to increase and grow the target audiences. Furthermore, as books are fairly accessible—one can find them at libraries or book stores—and do not cost a lot of money, the target audience is expanded to include those who are of both high and low economic standing.
* Short picture books: Soon after the publication of the three initial chapter books, Astrid Lindgren published shorter picture books. This created a new target audience for younger children who not only had a shorter attention span, but whom are also begging to learn to read. These books also expand to include a target audience involving parents of these young children—not only can the picture books can be used as bed-time stories, but it can also create a special bond between parent and child. Similar to how the original chapter books are accessible to most all economic statuses, these picture books are easily accessible as well.
* Movies: After the huge success of Pippi Longstocking books, they were adapted into multiple movies. Although these movies did not necessarily expand the target audience for Pippi Longstocking, it did strengthen the audiences’ investment and interest in the stories. Similar to how the books included audiences who spoke different languages, the movies were reproduced in multiple languages as well. The movies do, however, limit the audiences as it can only be accessed by those who have the money to afford buying a television, a VCR or DVD player, as well as the movie itself.
* T.V Shows: Similar to the Pippi Longstocking movies, the T.V shows were adapted to keep the growing audience interested and invested in the stories. However, these television shows did limit to only the audiences who had access to TVs.
* Music: Because the Pippi Longstocking movies and T.V shows were so popular, albums were created to include all of the songs in one place. Although it was not as popular in American culture, it did end up becoming a large part of Swedish culture. Many Swedish children grow up singing these songs, and thus continues the interest of Pippi Longstocking and support of the target audience as young children. (See appendix A).
* Merchandise: Because the target audience for Pippi Longstocking is mostly younger children, most of the merchandise includes stuffed toys of the main characters, bedding, clothing, children tea sets, video games, card games, and board games. Yet because the intended audience is young children, the brand marketers understood that Pippi as a character would be important to the entire family as well. Therefor there are merchandises such as cookie jars, children’s furniture (beds, dressers, lamps, etc.) and even Pippi dining-ware. Although there is not a “Pippi Longstocking company” that creates specific products for this brand, there are many companies that provide Pippi products (see appendix B). These merchandises serve to expand the target audience to include not only the young children who were already invested in the story, but the parents as well.
* Astrid Lindgrens Värld (World): Due to the huge popularity of Astrid Lindgren’s books in Sweden, a outdoor park was created in Vimmerby, Småland, Sweden. In this outdoor park, every location from Lindgren’s books have been recreated, but on a small scale that allows the target audience of small children to walk through the park feeling as if they are grown-ups. This greatly supports the interest of the the target audience of young children, as they can become a part of the story, and experience it first hand. One of the most popular houses is of course Villa Villekulla, the house Pippi lives found in every book, movie, TV show, and game. This house is probably just as iconic as Pippi herself, therefore being a popular attraction to any fan of Pippi Longstocking. Yet to put the icing on the cake, an actress is regularly there, dressed up as Pippi Longstocking and always telling stories about her many adventures. Children can come and listen to these stories, meet Pippi herself, along with explore the house she lives in and meet Tommy, Annika, Herr Nelson, and Lilla Gubben. Because of these hands on interactions, it continues to support and expand the audiences interest in the story.

Improvements to continue Pippi’s Popularity:

Although Pippi Longstocking is still well known in todays day and age, it is losing popularity. This can only be reasoned due to it being un-relatable and outdated in terms of todays view of technology. There have been much technological improvements since Pippi Longstocking was first published, and although it has adapted to technologies these new inventions—such as creating the video games, movies, and television shows—it lacks that plot lines that reflect and incorporate said new technologies. It is because of this that I believe if we were to create a “new Pippi” that included the problems of technology, more children will become interested. An example of how this could be achieved is have Pippi playing video games. Or have stores that teach the young target audiences about online safety or cyber-bullying. Yet whatever direction it could be taken, the best way to continue the popularity of Pippi Longstocking is to redesign her in a way that does not lose who she originally was, but incorporates the lifestyle of styles of todays society.

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Appendix A (music):

Swedish theme song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5x-bUTWTTcs>

English theme song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PHNc6gXucfE>

Appendix B ( merchandise ):



<http://www.babble.com/home/pippi-longstocking-toys/>

 <http://www.muurla.com/en/products/pippi-longstocking-enamel-jar-cup-coffee>