

Babysnatchers: beanie babies rollercoaster ride essay example

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In the mid-1990s, one could use Ty Inc.'s Beanie Babies as cash in certain situations. That was how much in demand they are. Now they are a ho-hum toy brand everywhere from hobby shops to grocery stores. Back then, thieves of Beanie Babies even received their own name – Babysnatchers. Now people have trouble giving Beanie Babies away.

Let's look at the 4 P's of marketing (product, place, price and promotion) and compare them to the history of Beanie Babies and how they could be revived for the Beanie Babies: The Next Generation.

The product itself was exceptional for a stuffed toy. They were small enough for human baby hands, so they could take up little space on store shelves and could be stored easily. The stuffed animals were simply endearing, with floppy bodies and yet very realistic faces. They also came with names, poems and birthdays on heart-shaped tags.

However, Beanie Babies were not the only small, cute stuffed animal toys in the market. What Ty should have done was bend over backwards for their fans to promote brand loyalty. Instead, Ty became an eccentric, secretive company that had little interaction with their customers. They had an official website that was updated irregularly. Ty became secretive about when shipments would be sent to stores. After 1999, Ty even messed up a good thing by creating bigger toys based on the original Beanie Babies. They should have stayed small.

Ty originally placed their product in hard to find small shops and in special promotions with other companies like McDonald's for including special Teenie Beanie Babies in Happy Meals. This was a huge mistake. Ty should have made their product as easy to get as possible. Buyers actually staked

themselves out in parking lots looking for Ty delivery trucks in order to be the first ones to purchase new Beanie Babies. Customers often fought each other for a desired toy. Having to jump through hoops for a small stuffed animal does not make for a happy shopping experience.

Ty has since changed this policy and placed their new products in places as diverse as national drug-store chains to online outlets like Amazon. Ty's hope in re-launching the original Beanie Babies is to charm the newest generation instead of hoping that collectors from the 1990s will suddenly start collecting again.

Ty's big mistake was announcing that all Beanie Babies would be discontinued at the end of 1999 (Brown, 2004.) They had a good thing going – making limited editions of very cute toys. However, they carried the limited edition concept too far by stopping their highly lucrative Beanie Bay line entirely. Ty did announce a newer, “ next generation” line of Beanie Babies, but they never managed to capture their original appeal.

The original price of Beanie Babies was about \$5. This low price encouraged a “ potato chip” mentality, since new customers could not purchase just one Beanie Baby. However, Ty encouraged the outrageous price predictions for their little toys in such collector publications as Mary Beth's Bean Bag World. These publications predicted that Beanie Babies would be worth thousands of dollars by 2008 (Aziz, 2013.). These high prices by “ investors” never occurred. This tended to tick off many customers and collectors who stopped buying.

When Beanie Babies first hit the market in 1994, no one could have predicted the sudden sharp rise of auction website eBay. Ty would not reveal

how many Beanie Babies they made. They let the customers wonder which types would become rare. When customers began selling their supposedly rare Beanie Babies, they discovered hundreds of the same product up for sale on eBay. This drove the prices down, even below the original purchase price. In order to keep customers happy, Ty should concentrate on making the original captivating low-priced product and not encourage “ investors.” This way, people who paid high prices for a Beanie Baby, thinking that they were building a nice nest egg, will not feel fleeced. Even if the product was purchased in the secondary market, customers may still blame Ty for not delivering on promises given of the future value of Beanie Babies.

Bringing back the original pre-2000 Beanie Babies – original colors, shapes and names – would be successful if Ty would concentrate on making a good, inexpensive product for kids. Avoid gimmicks like Limited Editions, Happy Meals promotions and predicting the sudden rise in future toy values. Just make a good, cute, safe, friendly-faced toy that helps bring a little softness to an otherwise hard world. Be more open and honest with customers so they feel that they know what they are getting into. Be more interactive with customers and address their concerns. Ask customers for suggestions and be prepared to take criticism. If particular Beanie Babies are to “ retire,” let the customers know months in advance so they have time to buy the product or protest the retirement decision. Encourage the fun value of Beanie Babies and not the possible collectability. Make sure that Beanie Babies are tough enough to be played with. They are supposed to be toys, after all.

Works Cited

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