

2003

Integrated Marketing Communications At Harlequin Enterprises: The Marketing Of Happily Ever After

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**INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS
AT HARLEQUIN ENTERPRISES:
The Marketing of Happily Ever After**

BY

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Thesis Advisor

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**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Master of Arts in Corporate and Public Communication
Seton Hall University**

2003

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to thank her family, Oliver, Brenda and Pharon Dungee, for their unfailing love and unwavering support. Also, the author thanks the faculty members of the Master of Arts in Corporate and Public Communication Program, especially her thesis advisor, Dr. Donald N. Lombardi. Lastly, the author thanks Harlequin Enterprises.

God Bless.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I -	INTRODUCTION	
	Origin of the Romance Novel.....	1
	From Third Century A.D. to the Twenty-first Century.....	3
	Research Question.....	4
	Subsidiary Questions.....	4
	Purpose of the Study.....	5
	Objectives.....	6
	Definition of Terms.....	6
	Limitations.....	9
Chapter II -	ROMANCE FICTION - STARRING HARLEQUIN ENTERPRISES	
	From Harlequin Books to Harlequin Enterprises.....	11
	Harlequin Enterprises - From Publisher to Marketer.....	12
	The Harlequin Product - Is Every Novel the Same?.....	15
	The Bias Against Formula Fiction.....	20
	Romance Fiction - The Stepchild of the Publishing Industry.....	21
	Industry Growth and Competition - If You Can't Beat Them, Buy Them.....	23
	I Scream, She Screams, We All Scream for ... Romance - Why Do Women Read Romance?.....	26
	Who Reads Romance Fiction? - Is It Only Little Old Ladies, Young Girls, Homemakers?.....	31
Chapter III -	HARLEQUIN'S INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES	
	What is Integrated Marketing Communications?.....	34
	Advertising.....	36
	Sales Promotions.....	38
	Public Relations.....	40
	Direct to Consumer.....	43

Chapter IV - SURVEY METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

Design and Development of the Survey.....	47
Purpose of the Survey	48
Distribution of the Questionnaire.....	49
Analysis of the Survey Results.....	50
Summary of the Survey Results.....	58

Chapter V - THE END - AND THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER

Summary and Conclusions.....	59
Recommendations.....	61
Future Study.....	64

References.....	66
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Appendices.....	70
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Appendix A: Romance Publishing Timeline	
Appendix B: Harlequin Magazine Advertisement	
Appendix C: Inside-back Cover Blurbs	
Appendix D: Invitation to Join the Harlequin Reader Service	
Appendix E: eHarlequin.com Site Map	
Appendix F: Questionnaire	
Appendix G: Open-end Responses	

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Origin of the Romance Novel

There are four schools of thought on the origin of the romance novel. The first asserts that the romance novel has its origins in a form of prose that became popular in the Mediterranean around third century A.D. Written in Greek, these ancient narratives combine a mixture of romantic love and adventure between a well-born, handsome hero and a young, beautiful heroine. The two lovers are separated, and the remainder of the story is about their travels in distant lands, their spectacular misfortunes, and their eventual reunion (<http://reg.ucsc.edu/soc/aci/winter1998/lit.html>). Conversely, the second school of thought argues that the romance novel originated in France during the eleventh and twelfth centuries in the form of Medieval romances — conventional tales of chivalric adventure, celebrating courtly love in the framework of a knight's quest for his lady's favor (<http://www.unb.ca/extend/wss/1146demo/introduction.htm>).

The third, and perhaps the most compelling argument, maintains that Samuel Richardson's novel, *Pamela*, published in England in 1740, is the precursor of the romance novel. Labeled a "seduction novel," *Pamela* and other novels published during this era, mark the birth of lengthy fictional narratives written in prose. It is argued that rather than recount the far-fetched adventures of knights and other idealized heroes and heroines, this new breed of narrative tended to recreate the worlds and everyday lives of ordinary people. In the novel *Pamela*, the author conveyed the tale of a young servant's

long resistance to the attempts of her predatory master to seduce her

(<http://www.uncp.edu/home/canada/work/markport/lit/amnovel/fall2002/01intro.htm>).

Finally Nina Baym (1978, as cited by Thurston, 1987, p. 34) states that the “women’s fiction” that appeared between 1820 and 1870, written by and for American women (called variously “domestic” and “domestic sentimental” by other scholars) is the origin of the romance novel. Baym insists that these novels are the wellspring of contemporary romance because they are about “the formation and assertion of a feminine ego, about achieving a sense of self-worth as a female rather than remaining a permanent child.” She declares that these nineteenth century novels “tell, with variations, a single tale ... They chronicle the ‘trials and ultimate triumph’ of a heroine who, beset with hardships, finds within herself the qualities of intelligence, will, resourcefulness, and courage sufficient to overcome them.”

The author suggests that the origin of the romance novel can, in some way, be connected or traced to all of the above. To the ancient Mediterranean tales for their contribution of the notion that love conquers all. To the Medieval romance for its contribution of chivalric adventure and courtly love. To Samuel Richardson for writing a lengthy fictional narrative and for recreating the worlds and everyday lives of ordinary people. And finally, to the women’s fiction that appeared between 1820 and 1870 for its contribution of tales of “trials and ultimate triumph” of a heroine who, beset with hardships, overcomes them.

From Third Century A.D. to the Twenty-first Century

In 2001 romance fiction comprised more than a third of all popular fiction (paperback and hardcover) and more than half of all popular paperback fiction sold in North America. The romance category generated \$1.52 billion dollars in sales, with no other single category of fiction approaching the size of this market. Of the 2,000 romances released that year, Harlequin Enterprises published 1,067 — 50 percent of the total. Its closest competitor, Kensington Publishing Corporation, published only 10 percent of the total romances released (<http://www.rwanational.org/statistics.stm>). On a global scale, Harlequin and Silhouette romance novels are sold in more than 89 international markets and are translated into 26 languages. During its first fifty years, the publisher withdrew from only one market: it stopped selling in Saudi Arabia when the royal family feared burgeoning sales made Saudi women too starry-eyed (Arrizza, 1996).

Today, 50 million women around the world read Harlequin and Silhouette romance novels. Questions about the publisher are even included in the 20th Anniversary edition of the classic board game, Trivial Pursuit. Harlequin Enterprises' brand awareness is so high and its reputation so stellar that when polled, 86 percent of the *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* audience — comprised of both men and women — selected Harlequin as the answer to the question: "Which publisher is known for its romance novels?" (Harlequin Enterprises Press Kit, 2002).

To many, the publishing industry is one grounded in art and not in science; an industry that has less to do with business principles and more to do with intuition and gut reaction. At Harlequin, however, a marketing team headed by William Lawrence Heisey proved successful publishing is actually a crafty combination of both art and science.

With Heisey's guidance, Harlequin utilized the principles of integrated marketing communications — a concept of marketing communications planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic role of a variety of communication disciplines — to become “the publishing success story of the 20th century” (Dixon, 1999, p. 13) and the most well-known publisher of series romance fiction. In this study, the author will explore the history, social and cultural significance of Harlequin Enterprises and examine the publisher's use of integrated marketing communications.

Research Question

How has efficacious use of integrated marketing communications established Harlequin Enterprises as the most well-known publisher of series romance fiction?

Subsidiary Questions

In an effort to comprehend Harlequin Enterprises' efficacious use of integrated marketing communications, this study also will devote time to answering the following questions:

1. How did Harlequin Enterprises transition from a book publishing company to a marketing company?
2. Why is romance fiction treated like the “step-child” of the publishing industry?
3. What are the sociological, psychological and cultural factors explaining why women read romance fiction?

4. What is the demographic profile of the typical reader of romance fiction? The typical reader of Harlequin/Silhouette romance fiction?
5. What are the key components of Harlequin Enterprises' integrated marketing communications plan?
6. What are readers' perceptions of Harlequin Enterprises? What are readers' perspectives?
7. Does the strength of the Harlequin brand extend into categories beyond books?

Purpose of the Study

In 1984 Margaret Ann Jensen authored *Love's Sweet Return*, an examination of the phenomena of romance fiction, focusing specifically on Harlequin Enterprises. In this book Jensen explored the social significance of Harlequin. She analyzed the shifts in the content of the publisher's romance novels, particularly as these shifts pertained to women's changing roles in society. Fifteen years later Jay Dixon authored *The Romance Fiction of Mills & Boon 1909-1990s*, examining Harlequin Enterprises' portrayal of sex, love, marriage, class, motherhood and femininity. Dixon also challenged many popular myths about romance fiction in general, and deemed Harlequin and Silhouette romance novels important cultural barometers.

The purpose of this study is to continue where Jensen and Dixon left off. Through review of literature, primary research and personal interviews the author will explore the social significance of Harlequin Enterprises as well as examine the publisher's efficacious use of integrated marketing to become the most well-known publisher of series romance fiction. While many may agree that Harlequin Enterprises

created the contemporary romance fiction genre, few studies have explored the publisher's business savvy or the integrated marketing strategy that led to its success.

Objectives

As someone who has had a lifelong love affair with romance fiction and a keen interest in the concepts of integrated marketing communications, the author's objectives are threefold. The first objective of the study is to communicate the rise of Harlequin Enterprises, specifically its metamorphosis from a publisher to a marketer. The second objective is to identify the readers of romance and to better understand why they read romance fiction, Harlequin and Silhouette romance novels in particular. Moreover, from primary research results, the author will analyze reader involvement with Harlequin as well as their perceptions of and perspectives on the Harlequin/Silhouette brands. The third objective is to illustrate specific examples of Harlequin's use of integrated marketing strategies in the form of advertising, sales promotions, public relations, direct mail and Internet marketing.

Definition of Terms

PUBLISHING TERMS

1. Romance Novel - a book in which a love story is the central focus and that has an emotionally satisfying ending that results from a positive resolution to the central love story. The central love story concerns two people falling in love and struggling to make the relationship work. The conflict in the book centers on the love story. The climax in the book resolves the love story. Romance novels are based on the idea of an innate

emotional justice — the notion that good people in the world are rewarded and evil people are punished (<http://www.rwanational.org/statistics.stm>).

2. Women's Fiction Novel - a book that focuses on relationships, but not necessarily that of a love-story relationship. It may center, for example, on family relationships, friendships, or a love relationship — or all three (<http://www.rwanational.org/statistics.stm>).

3. Formula Fiction - highly standardized repetitious literature, with the primary purpose of reassuring escape and entertainment. Differs from mimetic literature or serious literature, which is reproductive of reality and frequently complex and ambiguous (Jensen, 1984, p. 16).

4. Category/Series Romance - a shorter paperback romance novel that is released as part of a numbered series. Series romances are released in numbered order, and shelved monthly like a periodical — with the previous month's titles being replaced by next month's titles every several weeks. Readers frequently buy series romance on the basis of brand-name loyalty to the series rather than a strongly developed preference for specific authors (Jensen, 1984, p. 32).

5. Single-title Romance - a longer romance *not* released as part of a series. It is packaged and shelved like any other mass-market paperback or hardback fiction book (<http://www.rwanational.org/statistics.stm>).

MARKETING TERMS (Belch & Belch, 2001)

6. Integrated Marketing Communications - a concept of marketing communications planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic role of a variety of communication disciplines — including general advertising,

direct response, sales promotion, Internet marketing and public relations — and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communications impact.

7. Advertising - any paid form of non-personal communication about an organization, product, service or idea by an identified sponsor.

8. Public Relations - the management function that evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or organization with the public interest, and executes a program to earn public understanding and acceptance.

9. Publicity - communication regarding an organization, product, service, or idea that is not directly paid for or run under identified sponsorship. Blanco (2000) further explains that publicity is free, perceived as objective and defined as any kind of media or news coverage.

10. Sales Promotion - marketing activities that provide extra value incentives to the sales force, distributors, or the ultimate consumer and can stimulate immediate sales.

Consumer-oriented promotional activities include contests, sweepstakes, sampling, rebates, premiums, and point-of-purchase materials. Trade-oriented promotional activities include merchandising allowances, price deals, sales contests and trade shows.

11. Direct Marketing - a system of marketing by which an organization communicates directly with customers to generate a response and/or transaction. Direct-marketing media include direct mail, telemarketing, print and broadcast.

12. Internet/Interactive Marketing - a form of marketing communication that is two-way in nature. Allows for the back-and-forth flow of information whereby users can receive and alter information and images, make inquiries, respond to questions, and make purchases. Forms include the Internet, CD-ROMs, kiosks, and interactive television.

Limitations

Harlequin Enterprises is a prime example of a company pursuing a global growth strategy. Over the past few decades the company has transferred its best practices — what works well in North America — to markets abroad, leading to phenomenal success. “It has looked beyond basic notions of romance fiction and proved that readers in Osaka, Paris, Taipei, Warsaw or New York can get into Harlequins in the same way as readers in Winnipeg” (Pecaut, 1995, p. 33). Harlequin Enterprises has offices in 19 countries around the world and three acquisition centers, including Toronto, New York and London. As cited in the Introduction, Harlequin and Silhouette novels are sold in more than 89 international markets and are translated into 26 languages around the world. A limitation of this study is that it focuses primarily on the North American operations of Harlequin Enterprises.

Another limitation to the study is that it focuses primarily on the publishing businesses of Harlequin Enterprises. Movie and television production are two areas of vertical integration that Harlequin has explored over the years — after producing its first movie in 1977, which was adapted from one of its romance novels.

Additionally, the focus of the study is limited to the Harlequin and Silhouette series imprints, comprising about 75 percent of the publisher’s book sales. Harlequin’s non-series imprints include Mira and Red Dress Ink. Mira is the publisher’s mainstream women’s fiction line, ranging from romance to psychological suspense to relationship novels. Red Dress Ink is the publisher’s mainstream “chick lit” imprint, reminiscent of *Bridget Jones Diary*. The books depict young (18-35), single, primarily urban women coping with the pressures of the dating scene.

Finally, due to monetary constraints, the author was unable to ensure a truly random sample of North American romance readers for the survey. The author primarily relied upon romance readers' lists on the Internet. Moreover, given the total number of responses, survey results should be viewed more as qualitative rather than quantitative.

Chapter II

ROMANCE FICTION - STARRING HARLEQUIN ENTERPRISES

From Harlequin Books to Harlequin Enterprises

Before there was Harlequin Enterprises, there was Mills & Boon. Founded in 1908 in London, Mills & Boon published plays as well as crime, comic and historical novels. They also published a group of books that dealt primarily with human emotions, and according to Dixon (1999), the successors of which would eventually make the name of Mills & Boon synonymous with series romance fiction.

In the late 1920s, though still continuing fiction and non-fiction publishing, Mills & Boon began to specialize in romance fiction. These early works of romance were published in hardback only and sold mainly to commercial libraries. It was during the depression of the 1930s that escapism — the tendency to, or practice of, seeking distraction from what normally has to be endured — was first applied to books. There was a rapid proliferation of commercial libraries and a dramatic rise in the sales of escapist reading material such as medical, historical and contemporary romances. Consequently, Mills & Boon prospered (Dixon, 1999).

The success of Mills & Boon continued into the 1950s when the company attracted the attention of Harlequin Books, founded in 1949 by Canadian publishing executive, Richard Bonnycastle. At that time Harlequin published mainly reprints — subsequent printings of books already published that preserves the identical text of the previous printing — of westerns, mysteries and thrillers, as well as a few general books, from classics to cookbooks. In 1957, however, Mary Bonnycastle, wife of Harlequin's

founder, noticed the enormous popularity of what she called “nice little books with happy endings,” and suggested that Harlequin enter into a partnership with Mills & Boon (Harlequin Enterprises Press Kit, 2002).

During the next fifteen years, Harlequin began to regularly import romances from the publisher for distribution into North America. The increase in sales and revenue enabled Mills & Boon to switch from hardback to paperback publishing in the 1960s. In 1971, Harlequin solidified the relationship by purchasing Mills & Boon. The Bonnycastles converted the new company to a public corporation, changed the name from Harlequin Books to Harlequin Enterprises Limited, relocated to Toronto, Canada, and focused exclusively on publishing romance fiction. In 1972, Harlequin Enterprises expanded into countries such as France, Germany, Italy, Holland, Greece, Japan, Scandinavia and South America.

The seventies proved to be a dynamic era for Harlequin Enterprises. It was during this decade that the publisher adopted a marketing focus and began to identify itself as a marketing company — a publishing industry first. Margaret Ann Jensen (1984) sets the stage when she asserts, “instead of being classified as simply a book publishing firm, Harlequin is more appropriately defined as a marketing company. It identifies itself as such and that is its orientation” (p. 42). How did Harlequin acquire this orientation? How have they been able to maintain it?

Harlequin Enterprises - From Publisher to Marketer

When Harlequin Enterprises passed from Richard and Mary Bonnycastle to their son, Richard Jr., the company was transformed from a publishing company to a

marketing company. Richard Jr. hired a management team headed by William Lawrence Heisey, a Torontonian, Harvard Business School graduate, and a marketing executive who had just spent 13 years at Proctor and Gamble (P&G). Heisey's work experience is significant because P&G is considered by many to be "the marketing company of the 20th century." Its origins date back to 1837 when it began as a small, family operated soap and candle company. Today, P&G markets more than 250 products to more than five billion consumers in 130 countries (<http://www.pg.com>). As stated by Aaker (1991) P&G also is a company in which the power of branding and a commitment to the development of brand equity and market positioning are apparent. For example, P&G markets more than 10 brands of laundry detergent — and successfully positions each one differently (Belch & Belch, 2001).

As president of Harlequin Enterprises, Heisey utilized the marketing and branding knowledge he acquired at Proctor & Gamble and applied packaged goods marketing techniques to publishing. He soon decided that with thousands of titles being published each year, romance novels might sell more easily if they had recognizable brand names, like detergents — and like such earlier publishing successes as the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew books ("Her passion," 1993). With this new marketing strategy, Harlequin was not selling individual authors with specific appeals. Instead the publisher was selling its brand name. Readers, therefore, did not have to wait for their favorite author's irregular, intermittent output. Instead, they purchased books on the basis of the publisher — Harlequin — rather than the writer. Additionally, Harlequin Enterprises helped to direct the creativity of its authors with editorial guidelines, guidelines that were market-oriented. The result was a uniform romance product that readers could "trust." As

Heisey cheerfully reported to *The Financial Post*, "it is as though Harlequin were selling one standing consumer product, rather than books" (Jensen, 1984, p. 39).

Harlequin also was the first publisher to systematically and successfully test consumer response and to gear its products toward its readers. Under Heisey's direction, Harlequin also launched a research program to better understand what "typical" romance readers wanted in terms of settings, characters, and plots. Since that time, research has become such a regular part of corporate operations that Harlequin Enterprises rarely launches a new product until it has first conducted consumer research studies.

In addition, Harlequin made significant strides in the area of distribution. The interchangeability of the novels and the conceptualization of Harlequin novels as a consumer product led to the realization that romances could be sold in the same places as other consumer products — places such as local drugstores, supermarkets and even department stores. By setting up racks of romance novels in these outlets, Harlequin brought its products into high traffic areas for female consumers. It increased its exposure to include women who did not usually patronize bookstores and as Jensen (1984) notes, made buying a romance as easy as buying aspirin.

During the 1960s and 1970s, Harlequin reigned unchallenged with an 80 percent share of the North American series romance market. Net revenues grew from nearly \$8 million in 1971 to more than \$265 million in 1980. Harlequin's assets increased from \$4 million in 1970 to more than \$116 million in 1980. Fiction sales jumped from 6 million books sold in 1965 to 218 million books sold in 1982, and the company experienced a 35 percent annual growth rate for more than 15 years (Jensen, 1984).

Heisey was eventually named *Marketing Magazine's* "Man of the Year" for his innovative leadership at Harlequin Enterprises during the 1970s and early 1980s. He had accomplished a great deal, essentially creating the Harlequin "brand" and building its brand equity — characterized as a brand with 1) high name awareness, 2) perceived quality, 3) brand loyalty, and 4) strong brand associations (Aaker, 1991). As branding expert, Joe Marconi stated, (as cited in Diekmeyer, 2000) "a product is something that is made in a factory; a brand is something that is bought by the customer. A product can be copied by a competitor; a brand is unique" (p. D2). The Harlequin brand, under Heisey's direction and the direction of his team, had achieved this uniqueness.

The Harlequin Product - Is Every Novel the Same?

What is the Harlequin product? In its simplest form, the Harlequin product is a romance novel. The romance novel is defined by Romance Writers of America as a book in which a love story is the central focus and that has an emotionally satisfying ending that results from a positive resolution to the central love story. The central love story concerns two people falling in love and struggling to make the relationship work. The conflict centers on the love story. The climax in the book resolves the love story. Romance novels are based on the idea of innate emotional justice — the notion that good people in the world are rewarded and evil people are punished. In a romance novel, the lovers who risk and struggle for each other and their relationship are rewarded with emotional justice and unconditional love. This differs from women's fiction, which focuses on relationships, but not necessarily that of a love-story relationship. It may

center, for example, on family relationships, friendships, or a love relationship — or all three.

Moreover, for the purposes of this study, the Harlequin product also is categorized as a series romance, a shorter paperback romance novel that is released as part of a numbered series. Series romances are released in numbered order, and shelved monthly like a periodical, with the previous month's titles being replaced by next month's titles every several weeks. Interestingly, two-thirds of romance readers read series romance — 45 percent of whom read single-title and series romances combined and 18 percent of whom read only series romance, up 8 percentage points from 1998 (<http://www.rwanational.org/statistics.stm>).

The first branded series from Harlequin was Harlequin Romance. Described by the publisher as light, entertaining and tender love stories capturing the essential dream of pure romance and featuring warm, believable characters with strong, traditional values. Then in 1973, the publisher introduced Harlequin Presents considered to be racier than Harlequin Romance. In subsequent years, Harlequin Superromance, Harlequin American Romance and Harlequin Temptation followed. Today Harlequin Enterprises markets the classic “girl-gets-guy story” across 15 branded series, ranging in page count from 200-300 pages and ranging in cost from \$3.99 - \$5.99.

Harlequin effectively uses positioning — defined as the art and science of fitting the product or service to one or more segments of the market in such a way as to set it meaningfully apart from competition — to market its 15 series. While the book publishing division of Harlequin Enterprises is positioned as “making any time special,” each series is positioned to target different segments of the romance fiction market.

Within each Harlequin and Silhouette series, the books look alike (i.e., same dimensions, logo, and cover format), providing a consistent message and image. Books within the Harlequin Presents series, for example, all have the same white cover, the same prominent script logo and the same cover design with a circular inset showing a loving couple (Linden & Rees, 1992). Harlequin Blaze, on the other hand, has covers that are more provocative. These books have vibrant red covers, a bold logo and a more risqué embrace. By looking at these elements of the cover, the customer knows exactly what to expect before they even read the back-cover blurb. Loyal and dedicated readers are able to pick and choose from the different series “depending on story complexity and the level of sensuality they are seeking” (Arrizza, 1996, p. 32). Each series also has a selling line [see Table 2a], described as “a memorable set of words that dramatizes the consumer benefit in the communications strategy. The selling line defines the [series’] place in the market and the pledge the [series] makes to the consumer” (Schultz, Tannenbaum & Lauterborn, 1992, p. 70).

The latest series to be launched is Harlequin Blaze. As explained by Donna Hayes, current president and chief operating officer of Harlequin Enterprises, Blaze is in response to market research indicating that 22 percent of American women fall between the ages of 21 and 34, and among this age group there is strong reader demand for “sexier editorial.” To meet this demand, Blaze is positioned as fun, innovative and risqué, books with trendy urban settings — from fun and flirtatious to dark and sensual. Blaze novels, says Hayes, “appeal to fans of *Sex and the City* and to the readers of *Cosmopolitan*. In short the books are written by and for younger readers” (as cited in Starr, 2002, p. 22).

Table 2a

Harlequin Series (In order of market introduction)		
Romance	Love affairs that last a lifetime	Tender love stories that capture the essential dream of pure romance. Light and entertaining, featuring warm, believable characters with strong, traditional values-around the corner and around the world.
Presents	Seduction and passion guaranteed	Intense, international and provocatively passionate: the number-one romance series, selling more copies than any other series in paperback history. Meet sophisticated men of the world and captivating women in glamorous, international settings.
Superromance	Emotional, exciting, unexpected	Longer romance novels featuring realistic, believable characters in a wide range of emotionally involving stories. Intense committed relationships are heightened by page turning excitement and compelling characters.
American Romance	Upbeat all-American romances	Be swept away by imaginative new twists into a world where anything is possible and where dreams come true. Sexy heroes meet their match in sassy, headstrong women in these upbeat and lively romances about the pursuit of love in the backyards, big cities and wide-open spaces of America.
Temptation	Sassy, sexy, seductive!	Harlequin's boldest, most sensuous line features exciting stories about men and women living and loving in the 21st century! Sexy, fast-paced stories that reflect the attitudes, desires, lives and language of today's woman.
Intrigue	Romantic suspense	Electrifying romance and heart-stopping suspense that make for an exhilarating read. Whether a murder mystery, psychological suspense thriller or woman in jeopardy, lives are always on the line... and so are hearts!
Historical	Historical, romantic, adventure	From medieval sagas to lighthearted westerns, these vivid historical romances capture the imagination with their richness; passion and adventure all played out against the panoramic backdrop of the past.
Duets	Two-in-one romantic comedy	These stories deliver romance with comedy in an entertaining look at the "lighter side of love." A fun and unbeatable value.
Blaze	Red-hot reads!	Harlequin's sexiest series yet! Blaze stories are the perfect combination of fantasy and playfulness with innovative plots that are sexy in premise and execution.

Responsive to the changing demographics of North America, Harlequin also publishes two series targeting Hispanic women — Harlequin *Bianca*, positioned as tender romances, and Harlequin *Deseo*, positioned as passionate, sensual reads. Books in these two series are written in English and then translated into Spanish. Interestingly, despite publishing “Adam and Eva” in the 1980s, a romance with an African-American hero and heroine, Harlequin Enterprises has not yet branded a series of romances targeting the African-American consumer. By the early 1990s, Kensington Publishing Corporation (a Harlequin competitor and the last remaining independent U.S. publisher of hardcover, trade and mass market paperback books) filled the void and launched the Arabesque line of romance novels. In 1998, however, Arabesque was sold to BET Holdings, the multi-media, entertainment company that owns and operates Black Entertainment Television (BET).

Today, with the multicultural marketing savvy of BET, Arabesque publishes more than 50 books per year, prints more than 1.6 million copies annually and has 45+ African-American authors (<http://www.bet.com/books>). At present Arabesque is the only line of African-American romance novels distributed by a major publisher (former owner Kensington). Why hasn't Harlequin Enterprises tapped into this market segment? Perhaps Linda Gill, Arabesque publisher, explains some of Harlequin's reluctance when she stated, “I don't know if the marketplace is strong enough right now for two major publishers to operate at the same level...” (as cited in Rosen, 1999, p. 40).

Finally, in regards to the Harlequin product, the company also publishes Steeple Hill, a Christian imprint launched in the late 1990s. Like many of Harlequin's products, Steeple Hill also was launched in response to a changing market and new trend. In this

case, North American's growing interest in religious material and spirituality. However, the road to Steeple Hill's success has not been without obstacles. "Getting some Christian booksellers and consumers to consider Christian romance is a struggle because some think the category is an oxymoron. They have trouble understanding how a romance can be a Christian book," notes Anne Goldsmith, acquisitions editor of women's fiction at HeartQuest, Tyndale's romance imprint (as cited in Winston, 2002, p. 42). Despite some level of difficulty distributing the books through traditional Christian bookstores and retailers, Harlequin has dealt with this issue by selling the books through an aggressive direct mail program [see Chapter III].

The Bias Against Formula Fiction

The Harlequin and Silhouette product, like most romance fiction, is considered formula fiction. John Cawelti (1976, as cited in Jensen, 1984) argues that formula fiction is characterized by two main features: it is highly standardized, repetitious literature and its primary purpose is reassuring escape and entertainment. As opposed to mimetic literature or serious literature which is reproductive of reality, frequently complex and ambiguous. Cawelti further argues, "comparing mimetic and formula fiction is like comparing apples and oranges" (p. 16).

Dixon (1999) supports this argument, suggesting that all genre fiction has its own characteristic plot line, whether it is love conquers all, or the lone avenger saving the weak. "Thus to decry romance fiction on the grounds that the plot is always the same is to betray an ignorance of the fundamental element of all genre fiction — the familiarity

of the plot" (p. 2). Although the base plot, as with all other genre fiction, remains constant, romance themes vary from decade to decade, author to author.

This raises the perennial question of formula, particularly romance formula: there seems to be a prevalent myth that romances are written to exact specifications — as if there were some rule that the first kiss has to take place by page 24. This notion raises the ire of many romance authors. With many asserting that formula is not the right word because with a formula all you have to do is plug in the pieces and you get the right answer. Instead these authors prefer the word convention, like the convention of the guarantee of a happy ending in a romance. Moreover, these authors are quick to point out that mystery and science fiction authors have observed the conventions of their chosen genre without enduring the same sort of mockery romance authors have (Bemrose, 1999).

Romance Fiction - The Stepchild of the Publishing Industry

According to Jensen (1984) long before other publishers took notice of Harlequin it had garnered admiration from the Canadian government. Since Harlequin Enterprises was one of the few financially viable Canadian-owned publishers, it was acclaimed in a federal government study of book publishing and held up as a model to other publishers who were advised to be as marketing conscious and as businesslike as Harlequin (p. 35). Harlequin's fellow publishers, however, did not accept the comparison and had this to say:

... for Canadian publishers who bring out books by Mordecai Ricchler or Robertson Davis or Hugh Hood, Harlequin is an interesting curiosity, nothing more. They sell garbage, and they sell it effectively, but the idea that one of our

serious publishers might actually emulate Harlequin is — in the eyes of publishing gents — altogether outlandish (Fulford, 1976, p. 7).

This double critical standard or “phallic criticism” as Mary Ellman, terms it, is a form of literary evaluation that assumes that “only men can write well and that only their bold subject matter is worth writing about” (Jensen, 1984, p. 22). To understand how this is applied to romance, consider that in 1979 the Association of American Publishers proposed the establishment of new book categories for which it would award prizes. The categories included science fiction, mysteries, and westerns, but not romances despite the fact that at the time romances constituted the largest single selling category in the paperback market (Jensen, 1984).

As Jensen (1984) goes on to say, “in a sexist society, the association of women with a phenomenon, whether it be an occupation, a name, a political party, a play activity or literature is enough to lessen its value and desirability” (p. 23). Dixon (1999) concurs by suggesting that the reason crime novels garner respect is often said to be because they are male — not just that they are written by men, about men, for men (which is no longer true in any case) but because they put forward male ideals. She further demands that before condemning [Harlequin] romance novels one has to accept that the romance genre is about love, just as detective fiction is about crime, and science fiction is about other worlds.

The criticism of romance fiction also comes from the feminists' camp, who claim romance fiction encourages unrealistic expectations in women. Their critique goes even deeper than simply the critique of romance fiction. They also critique the very notion of love, which they see as an ideology legitimizing women's oppression and trapping

women into exploitative heterosexual relationships. They claim that romance and love make women vulnerable, not just to exploitation, but also to being hurt by men. They contend, "it starts when you sink into his arms and ends with your arms in his sink" (Jackson, 1993, p. 201).

As a final point, the romance fiction industry also bears some responsibility for its unfair treatment. As Hargreaves (as cited in "this thing called love," 1998) argues the sensual covers (i.e., the bodice rippers) seen until very recently did not help the misguided perception that romance fiction is more about sex and less about quality writing. As he asserts "the mainstreaming of many of today's covers is telling the public that yes, romances do have a sensual element to them, but they also have a well-developed plot, interesting characters and quality writing" (pp. 38-51).

Industry Growth and Competition - If You Can't Beat Them, Buy Them

As asserted by Thurston (1987, p. 3), the paperback romantic fiction industry came to full bloom between 1972 and 1982 [see Appendix A]. It was during this decade that the popularity of the romance novel led to shifts in the acquisitions of editors and shifts in the space allocation policies of public libraries. Used/exchange bookstores were afforded a new lease on life, and the romance novel fed the expansion of Walden and B. Dalton — at the time, two of the largest bookstore chains in the country. In addition, a broad array of complementary enterprises came into being during this decade, from romance review magazines and writers' organizations and conferences to a great outpouring of instruction manuals on "how to write a romance" (p. 4).

It was also during this time that “feedback from readers to publishers, both sought and volunteered, began to produce changes in sex-role portrayals (in thoughts, words, and deeds), which, in concert with other forces in society, contributed to further change in readers, which in turn produced still further change in romance texts. These modified stories then began to attract consumers from outside the existing universe of romance readers, fueling still more change in both readers and texts as distribution widened and sales continued to increase” (p. 7).

By the mid 1980s, the phenomenal success of Harlequin led to almost every paperback publisher in North America increasing its romance production or starting up new romance lines. Harlequin, however, managed to stay well ahead of any “wannabe” competitors mainly because none of them had Harlequin’s singular focus — romance fiction (Mallet, 1993). In fact, the only time Harlequin faced serious competition occurred in the 1980s when Simon and Schuster began publishing a series of books titled *Silhouette Romance*.

Several factors led to Simon and Schuster’s creation of the *Silhouette* imprint. Prior to the early 1980s, for most of its sales, Harlequin was dependent upon its distributors — Har-Nal Distributors in Canada, a company owned 50 percent by Harlequin and 50 percent by New American Library, a Simon and Schuster company in the United States. In the late 1970s Harlequin dissolved both of these arrangements and took over its own distribution. A sales organization, employing 130 people, was formed to promote the sells of Harlequin books in North America (Jensen, 1984). Unwilling to relinquish the romance profits and very upset by this move, Simon and Schuster created *Silhouette Romance* series, followed by three other *Silhouette* series [see Table 2b].

These books brought to the romance fiction genre modern American love stories, adding local color and a slice of American women's lives to romance novels for the first time (Harlequin Enterprises Press Kit, 2002).

In addition, Silhouette hired P.J. Fennell, Harlequin's vice president of sales and marketing, to be its president. Even though Fennell did not remain at Silhouette for long, it was long enough to lure away four of Harlequin's leading authors, including Janet Dailey, who, at the time, was the second best-selling female writer in the world. It also was long enough to introduce Silhouette to most of Harlequin's proven sales techniques like television advertising and international distribution. Silhouette became Harlequin's main rival. The fight for market share between the two publishers was fierce and lasted for four years, until Harlequin Enterprises simply purchased the competition.

Table 2b

Silhouette Series (In order of market introduction)		
Series	Selling Line	Description
Romance	Falling in love is just a page away	From courtship to commitment, love stories for today's woman with traditional values. Enchanting tales of romance that last a lifetime, with plots ranging from lighthearted humor to dramatic intensity.
Desire	Romances that burn with the heat of sensuous love	Highly passionate, emotionally powerful and always provocative. These sensuous and emotionally charged novels instantly deliver on the passionate promise of their red-hot covers.
Special Edition	Because there is more to love than just romance	Emotionally compelling stories that capture the intensity of living, loving and creating a family in today's world. A moving reading experience with depth and dimension.
Intimate Moments	The fulfillment of even the wildest dreams	A roller-coaster read that delivers romantic thrills in a world of suspense, adventure and more. The perfect mix of larger-than-life passions and high drama, played out on an international stage by characters who lead the lives readers dream of.

Today, Harlequin and Silhouette coexist in harmony and publish five times as many romance books as Kensington Publishing Corporation, their closest rival (Goldman, 2002). Although considered a leader and an innovator, Kensington's strength is tied to its historical romance novels rather than to series romance titles. Other romance series competitors such as Bantam's Circle of Love, Signet's Adventures in Love, Ballantine's Love and Live, Dell's Candlelight Ecstasy, Berkley/Jove's To Have and To Hold, and Bantam's Loveswept have come and gone. In early 2003, Warner Books introduced a new line titled Warner Forever, with plans to publish 24 titles per year in both series and single-titles. Only time will tell what percentage of the series romance fiction market this new line will be able to capture. (Note: As of March 2003, the AOL Time Warner Book Group was up for sale.)

I Scream, She Screams, We All Scream for ... Romance -

Why Do Women Read Romance?

First and foremost, Harlequin and Silhouette books are about the "relationship" between the hero and the heroine. "The covers may depict heaving bosoms and Fabio's muscular physique, but the sex always comes packaged within an emotional, passionate romance" (Doskoch, 1995, p. 46). The novels balance both the tension between conflicting psychological needs for excitement and security, and the tension between traditional and liberated notions of women's roles. This delicate balancing act is the basis of their appeal and power (Jensen, 1984).

"Like such games as football or baseball, [romance] stories are individual versions of general patterns defined by a set of rules. While the rules remain the same,

the highly varied ways in which they can be embodied in particular characters and actions produce a patterned experience of excitement, suspense, and release that in the case of the great games, can be perennially engrossing no matter how often the game is repeated” (Cawelti 1976, as cited by Jensen, 1984, p. 17). Repetitive games and stories appeal to two conflicting psychological needs, states Cawelti. He says, “humans need excitement to escape the boredom that pervades our everyday lives but we also need security to protect us from our anxieties about life’s uncertainties and tragedies. Escapist entertainment, [like reading a Harlequin romance], temporarily resolves the tension between these conflicting needs by emphasizing danger, sex and violence within the context of a tightly controlled fictional structure. As a result, [the romance reader’s] basic sense of security and order is intensified rather than disrupted” (p. 18).

Also, women read romances, Harlequins and Silhouettes in particular, because like fast food franchises and hotel chains around the world, they are dependable choices. As Jensen details, all available evidence indicates that readers perceive a romance’s conclusion to be a happy ending — a victory, not a defeat. The desire to hear tales of triumph over adversity is universal. Harlequin readers are drawn to romances because of this. The woman is at the center of the story, and after 200 to 300 pages of struggle, she emerges as a winner. “It is this fantasy ending, in juxtaposition with the more realistic conflict that precedes it, that emotionally hooks readers” (pp. 150-154).

Jensen (1984) further purports that women who read romances are fantasizing about freedom. Harlequin’s appeal is strengthened by the fact that women are socialized to value love relationships. The focus of the books — courtship and early marriage — has been shown to be one of the happiest periods of women’s lives. “The books

emphasize the stage in women's life cycle during which they enjoy the greatest amount of freedom, independence, companionship and equality that they will have, at least until post-child-rearing years. This is a stage women look forward to when they are young and enjoy retrospectively when they are older. It is understandable that women like to read about a period in their lives that involves the establishment of love relationships, a central part of their psychological makeup" (p. 153). Furthermore, as Jackson (1993) states, the ending of the novel at the moment of passion's consummation indicates that the excitement of reading romance fiction lies in the chase of "happily ever after." Thus, the attraction of romance narrative, in part, lies in the reader's ability to relive the chase over and over again.

Women also read romances to better understand men. Men, who have been taught to repress emotions and to hide vulnerability, are enigmas for many women. Primarily because traditionally women have been socialized to be the exact opposite. Women spend countless hours, individually and in friendship groups, trying to decipher the meanings of words, facial expressions, gestures and actions of the men with whom they are involved or want to be involved. Radway (1987) advances this theory by stating that the reading of romance satisfies a need for nurturance, which women do not receive in everyday life. The heroes of the romance are often "spectacularly masculine" (p. 128), but with a hint of something softer beneath the hard exterior. Therefore, romance fiction, Harlequins and Silhouettes in particular, assures readers that all is well. If men would only speak, they would say, "I love you." In addition, the reassuring message to female readers is that men can see beyond superficial physical beauty to the beauty within — which they prefer. The fantasy is made even more appealing because the hero honestly

believes the heroine is the sexiest most fascinating woman alive, even though the heroine knows she is not (Jensen, 1984).

Lastly, women read romance fiction for a sense of community in the form of continuities, trilogies and miniseries. These novels, featuring siblings, neighbors, children, and friends of characters' from previous novels, serve to "hook" readers. Readers recognize that their own lives are populated with siblings, friends, children, neighbors and strangers they meet along the way and that life is about more than a spouse or a boyfriend. Authors create a world in which readers want to spend time in — and their interest extends across several titles. In continuities, trilogies and miniseries, readers get to know a community of characters and look forward to seeing them again in future books (Dyer, 2002). For instance, consider that in 1981 Pocket Books published Jude Deveraux's *The Velvet Promise*, the first in what is perhaps the longest-running family saga in romance publishing history. The Montgomery novels now span 17 titles — representing generations of Montgomery's from 1293-present — and have more than 20 million copies in print.

While not the publisher of the Montgomery novels, Harlequin published its first continuity in 1992. Titled the Tyler series, the 12 novels were set in a Wisconsin town, each written by a different author. The idea to create the Tyler series developed when Marsha Zinberg, then senior editor and special projects editorial coordinator, took note of the increasing popularity of shows such as *LA Law* and *St. Elsewhere*, shows with continuing characters and interconnected story lines. The Tyler series was so popular that in the early 1990s Harlequin created a 900 number in which readers could call a hotline — for \$.95 a minute — to get an update on the personal lives of the inhabitants of

Harlequin's fictional town of Tyler, from the latest gossip to home tips and even a recipe for chocolate cheesecake (Simon, 1992, p. 32). To date, the series has been reissued 11 times via direct mail. In addition, it remains so successful that Harlequin released three new titles to be sold through traditional trade outlets in 2002 (Dyer, 2002).

Seventy-one percent of romance readers say they read their first romance at age 16 or younger (<http://www.rwanational.org/statistics>). Therefore, it appears that teenage girls also have their reasons for reading romance. In addition to the reasons above, Jackson (1993) asserts for young girls romance narrative serves as a resource they draw upon in making sense of their emotional and social world. Christian-Smith (1991) also says, for young girls romance fiction may be quite explicitly read in an attempt to learn the scripts and conventions of heterosexual relationships, suggesting that romance reading may be for girls a form of literary consumption about which they can demonstrate knowledge and competence.

Why don't men read romance? The answer is both simple and complex. According to Dixon (1999, p. 11), women are socialized into the male world, and have to be aware of men's milieu in order to negotiate it. Men, on the other hand, do not face the problem of feeling divided between two different worlds, and find it difficult to understand women's lives, tending to act as if there is only one culture — theirs. As a result, most men cannot enter the world of romance. Romance fiction primarily depicts the world from a woman's viewpoint. And in so doing, it immerses the reader in a female world of experience; both the external reality of the social world they live in, and the desired world of their hopes and dreams.

In summary, it is important to understand that the product perception/benefit encompasses what the product does for the consumer (Schultz et al., 1993). This perception may or may not encompass the reality of the product. The reality of the Harlequin product is 200 to 300 pages of a paperback book costing \$4 to \$6. The novels are light reading that can be picked up and put down with ease. They are predictable, characters are immediately recognizable, and each book moves along at about the same pace. They allow the reader to be physically present but mentally absent, particularly during dead time such as commuting, waiting for laundry to dry, or during a child's nap. Also, because of their paperback size, they are smaller and compact, making them easily portable (Jensen, 1984, pp. 145-148). That is the reality. Depending on the reader, however, the product perception/benefit or the reason for reading is escape, adventure, fantasy, entertainment, education, freedom, nurturance, community or all of the above.

Who Reads Romance Fiction - Is It Only Little Old Ladies,

Young Girls, Homemakers...?

51.1 million Americans read romance novels. This is up from 41 million in 1998 (<http://www.rwanational.org/statistics>) and an estimated 20 million in the mid-1980s (Jensen, 1984). Who comprises this 51 million? As Jensen (1984) conveys "a dozen stereotypes come to mind when one mentions romance readers. Is it little old ladies with blue-gray hair? Harried housewives with several whining children tugging at their skirts? Starry-eyed, impressionable young girls longing for Prince Charming?" (p. 140). From

the statistics, the answer is yes. The romance reader is this woman, because in essence the romance reader is every woman and any woman.

93 percent of all romance readers are women. Similar to the ethnic composition of the United States, 75 percent of romance readers are white, 11 percent are African-American and 11 percent are Hispanic, up from 9 percent in 1998. Although the average age is 43, with a median age of 35, readers represent all age groups [see Table 2c]. Half of the women who read romance fiction are married and one-third are single. Regarding level of education, 63 percent have some college education or higher. In addition, romance readers live throughout the United States, with a small majority (32 percent) living in the Midwest [see Table 2c].

Table 2c

Under 25	16%
25-34	21%
35-44	25%
45-54	17%
55 and older	21%
Midwest	32%
West	26%
South	20%
Northeast	16%

Readers of Harlequin and Silhouette Books

Just over 50 million people around the world read Harlequin and Silhouette novels, with 24 million current readers in North America. Compared to the average romance reader, the Harlequin reader is slightly older, with an average age of 47. She is more likely to be married (58 percent vs. 50 percent), which is not surprising given that she is older. The Harlequin reader is well educated; 61 percent (including post-grad) of current readers (15 years and older) attended or graduated college. Eight in ten work outside of the home, either at a full or part-time job, and 12 percent are retired. (Harlequin Enterprises Press Kit, 2002).

Reading is a key leisure activity among Harlequin and Silhouette customers. Half spend three or more hours reading throughout the week and on weekends (Harlequin Enterprises Press Kit, 2002). They exhibit strong levels of loyalty to Harlequin Enterprises and to the romance genre. For example, four out of five state that they will continue to buy romance paperbacks in the next 12 months, purchasing these books at outlets such as mall bookstores, mass merchandisers and grocery stores.

In Chapter I and Chapter II, the author explored the size of the romance fiction market as well as the history, social and cultural significance of Harlequin Enterprises. In the next chapter, she will examine specific examples of integrated marketing communications at Harlequin.

Chapter III

HARLEQUIN'S INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

What is Integrated Marketing Communications?

Belch & Belch (2001) define integrated marketing communications (IMC) as a concept of marketing communications planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic role of a variety of communication disciplines — including general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, Internet marketing and public relations — and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communications impact. It is the IMC strategy that sets the marketing and communication direction for the brand. For example, it can bring the marketing department together with sales, public relations, management, and research and development. Each of these departments must sign off on who the customer is, what the customer wants, and how the product will deliver.

The IMC strategy defines the position of the product, its personality, its competitive reason for being, and the benefit(s) the consumer will derive from the product (Schultz et. al, 1993). Harris (1998) adds that the IMC strategy also is rooted in the notion that consumers do the integration. Consumers put together all of their information and experiences and come up with favorable or unfavorable perceptions of companies, products, and brands. Companies that practice the principles of integrated marketing communications assume that consumers base their decisions on their perceptions of reality, rather than on reality itself. In short, “the customers’ perceptions

of a brand are based on the character of the brand, as expressed through the entire customer experience" (Gronstedt, 2000, p. 44).

The author concedes that this may seem like common sense. However, as proposed by Reichheld (1996), if integrated marketing communications is common sense, it is certainly not common. Many companies are unwilling to open up a dialogue of vertical communications within the firm, unable to align horizontal communications, and incapable of building customer and stakeholder relationships. Fortunately this was not and is not the case at Harlequin Enterprises.

Three principles have guided and continue to guide Harlequin's integrated marketing strategy. First, with every contact that the consumer has, she receives the same message: whatever your romance reading need and/or want, Harlequin Enterprises can provide it. Second, the consumer receives this same message from all of the sources used in the IMC strategy. This is grounded in the theory that the most successful communications are those in which there is a clear, consistent message on behalf of the product/service no matter what the source or system (Tynan, 1994). As Schultz et al. (1993) argues, "conflicting messages, delivered through a variety of sources, simply cannot and likely will not be processed by the consumer" (p. 38). Third, Harlequin understands the power of relationship marketing, recognizing that it costs five times as much to win a new customer than to keep an old one (Harris, 1998, p. 123). Thus, Harlequin practices two-way communication to build and maintain customer relationships. Following are examples of the Harlequin Enterprises integrated marketing communications strategy — past and present.

Advertising

In 1974, Harlequin Enterprises launched a massive television advertising campaign costing nearly \$400,000. The commercials targeted U.S. and Canadian women and were based on readers' letters to the company. The average increase in net sales in 10 U.S. cities after the viewing of these test commercials was an astonishing 79 percent (Jensen, 1984). When rolled out, the ads were shown during evening primetime and afternoon soap operas on network television. During this same period, Harlequin also took out full-page print ads in *Ladies Home Journal*. The print ads read:

“Remember when you first fell in love? Relive that special excitement... every time you read a Harlequin romance. Come into the world of Harlequin novels... and be a part of a wonderful dream” (Jensen, 1984, p. 40).

Additionally, advertising was coupled with a giveaway program in which two million free copies of a romance novel were sent to dealers, which they were to sell for 15 cents (the regular price at that time was 60 cents) in an attempt to attract new readers. Harlequin ads also appeared in trade magazines such as *Progressive Grocer*, *Supermarket News* and *Book Trade*. These trade ads emphasized the dollar potential of the loyal Harlequin reader. They stressed the fact that Harlequin readers regularly return to Harlequin displays week after week: “You’re missing a sure thing if you’re not offering her the books she loves — and buys — week after week” (Jensen, 1984, p. 41).

In 2000, nearly three decades later, Harlequin Enterprises ran their first pan-European initiative: a new 30 second commercial featuring a woman on a train. When she opens her Harlequin romance novel she is transported to a luxurious bubble bath. As she closes the book on reaching her destination, she returns to real life while the

voiceover ends with the line, "Makes any time special" (Kemp, 2000, p. 5). In 2002 Harlequin reportedly spent \$10 million on promotions and ads — 42 percent more than the publisher spent five years ago (Goldman, 2002).

In addition to placing print advertisements that focus on the publisher and the brand promise in publications like *Ladies Home Journal*, *People*, *Cosmopolitan* and *Publishers Weekly* (the industry's publication of record), Harlequin also places advertisements in targeted, niche publications. These targeted ads are "branded-series" specific and appear in publications such as *Romantic Times Bookclub* [see Appendix B] and *Affair de Coeur*. *Romantic Times Bookclub* is a monthly publication that reviews the 150 new romance novels on the shelves each month, with a paid subscriber base of 60,000 romance readers. *Affair de Coeur*, "the voice of the readers and writers of romance fiction," is a bi-monthly publication that reaches over 75,000 readers, authors and publishers.

Moreover, the Harlequin and Silhouette romance novels themselves also serve as advertising vehicles. On the inside-front cover of each novel is a list of the current novels available in that series. On the inside-back cover is a 60 to 70 word blurb on each of the books in the series that will be on sale the next month [see Appendix C]. In addition, the book contains a page listing previous novels by the author. With this strategy, Harlequin ensures that readers are always aware of past, present and future product offerings. In some cases, there are even advertisements for upcoming novels in other branded series. For example, a Silhouette Desire may include an advertisement for an upcoming Silhouette Intimate Moments or Harlequin Blaze.

Sales Promotions

Approximately one in every six mass-market paperbacks sold in North America is a Harlequin or Silhouette novel (Harlequin Enterprises Press Kit, 2002) and in 2001, the publisher reached \$583 million in revenues and \$377 million in sales (Harlequin Enterprises Annual Report, 2001). As explained by Kathryn Falk, *Romantic Times Book Club* publisher, "Romance readers are sort of a subculture. They make lists, keep notebooks; their husbands build special rooms for them to store their books!" (as cited in Linden & Rees, 1992, p. 70).

Thus, it is no secret that the reading of romance fiction can be somewhat addictive as acknowledged by Harlequin management as early as the 1970s: "We know through research and experience that Harlequins are very addictive to readers of all ages. Once we get a reader hooked she comes back for more" (Jensen, 1984, p. 41). This claim is further supported by the fact that romance readers read between 10 and 40 books a month and spend an average of \$1,200 a year on books (http://www.romantictimes.com/d_magaz/d6_ad.html). Consequently, a major goal of Harlequin's IMC strategy is getting its books into the hands of the consumer through sales promotions such as sampling, contests, coupons and point of purchase materials.

In the early days of its marketing program, Harlequin attracted new readers and solidified relationships with current readers by publishing a complete romance in *Good Housekeeping*, coupled with a coupon the reader could mail in to receive a free Harlequin Romance. Harlequin Romances also were packaged with such products as Kotex feminine napkins and Bio-Ad detergent. They were given away to customers at McDonalds on Mother's Day; given away with purchases of Avon products; and given

away with purchases of Jergens' lotion. Lastly, romances also were given away in exchange for a coupon found on the bottom of Ajax cans. Harlequin also sponsored contests in partnership with Delta Airlines, which rewarded readers with vacations to "exotic locales," a tie-in with the typically exotic settings of a Harlequin Romance and Harlequin Presents.

Contests are still a large part of the Harlequin consumer sales promotion strategy. Such as last year's Valentines Day contest, "Make Love Last All Year Long." Winners received a year's worth of FTD.com flowers, Godiva chocolates, and a one-year subscription to the Harlequin or Silhouette series of their choice. Additionally, customers who spent \$20 or more on book purchases from eHarlequin.com from Valentines Day through February 28, received a copy of a romance novel available only through the Web site.

In May 2001, the start of the wedding season, Harlequin sponsored, "A Walk Down the Aisle." Contestants were asked to explain in 250 words or less why winning a Harlequin wedding gown would make their day even more special. In addition to winning the gown, valued at \$3,500, the publisher also included a 6-day, 5-night honeymoon in Maui. In conjunction with this promotion, the Web site featured a wedding day planner, information on current wedding trends, and of course, books with a wedding-day theme were on sale for 20 to 30 percent off.

Public Relations

As Harris (1998) notes, there are five unique benefits that public relations brings to the integrated marketing strategy and the practice of building brand loyalty and brand equity:

Timeliness - public relations can be tied to real-time news coverage.

Adaptability - a public relations campaign can work in concert with advertising, direct mail, or sales promotion.

Credibility - third-person endorsement or the "halo effect" because consumers tend to find messages delivered by a trusted journalist more believable than purchased messages.

Cost-efficiency - the cost of a public relations effort is typically much lower than it would be for advertising.

Mobility - public relations can be conducted anywhere the imagination allows.

Harlequin Enterprises has taken advantage of these five unique benefits from the beginning. In the early 1980s, Harlequin was the first publisher to conduct "reader thank you parties," a great example of how Harlequin used cost-efficient and mobile public relations. The parties were set up in more than 20 cities in North America. Various members of management and Harlequin authors attended the parties along with approximately 200 women who responded to local newspaper ads and who were chosen by lottery. The women converged upon a local hotel dining room for a free lunch, speeches and free books given away in pink shopping bags. "Everyone was happy. Readers because they felt appreciated, authors because they felt recognized, television news teams because they had a snappy, up-beat human interest story, and certainly

Harlequin Enterprises because it had solidified customer loyalty and received a lot of relatively cheap publicity" (Jensen, 1984, p. 42).

In July 2001, the publisher conducted a public relations campaign in concert with the launch of Harlequin Blaze and Blaze's release of the "Sexy City Nights" miniseries. Prior to the launch, Harlequin conducted research that indicated there was a strong reader demand for "sexier editorial." The publisher also relied on secondary research that stated 22 percent of American women fall between the ages of 21 and 34. As part of the campaign, Harlequin surveyed 584 men and women, ages 18 to 34 about the sexiest trends of summer. The public relations and marketing team also visited nightclubs in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Dallas (the cities featured in the "Sexy City Nights" miniseries) to informally take the temperature of America and to converse with young men and women about "what's hot and what's not." The teams went beyond market research reports and engaged in first-hand, in-depth dialogue with consumers in order to stay abreast of future trends.

Although some of the Harlequin public relations activities also are in the form of contests, the goals are different from those of contests under the sales promotion strategy. With the latter, the goal is to stimulate trial and immediate sales whereas with contests under the public relations umbrella, the goal is to heighten readers' sense of involvement with Harlequin Enterprises and to garner media attention.

In June 2001, in celebration of Father's Day, Harlequin launched an online poll in which 4,000 eHarlequin.com members voted for the "Sexiest Single Dad." The Harlequin public relations team tapped into the growing trend of single-father households, which according to U.S. Census data have almost doubled over the past

decade — from 1.4 million households to 2.2 million households. This particular public relations effort was coupled with a sales promotion in which the publisher announced special deals on romances with a single dad theme.

In February 2002, Silhouette released details on the winner of its “Silhouette Makes You a Star!” contest. A woman from the Washington, D.C. area won a free round trip flight for two to New York City, a two-night stay at the Plaza Hotel, \$1,000 in spending money, a makeover at Elizabeth Arden’s Red Door Spa/Salon, and the opportunity to appear in a photo shoot for a Silhouette Books advertisement. The competition was advertised in all four Silhouette series as well as on eHarlequin.com. Contestants were asked to explain through a combination of words and art (drawings, magazine cutouts, or photographs) how Silhouette Books makes their love come alive. The winning entry described how Silhouette novels provide a welcome respite from tending to a special-needs child and also add spice to a marriage.

The most recent public relations push is a contest in which readers are asked to share their most romantic holiday moments. The contest is in concert with eHarlequin.com and the winner receives a JVC digital camcorder to capture future romantic moments. Additionally, their story will be featured on the Web site and in the eHarlequin.com newsletter.

Public Relations Geared Toward the Military

Typically the 1.4 million active-duty military personnel, the 1.5 million members of the National Guard and the Reserves (<http://www.defenselink.mil/faq>) and the book departments of post and base exchanges (PXs and BXs, respectively) do not immediately

come to mind when one thinks of public relations' opportunities. This is not true at Harlequin Enterprises. Several of their authors, including Merline Lovelace, a retired colonel in the Air Force, successfully target military bases for book signings. As cited by Rosen (2002), Lovelace often sells up to 500 books at an exchange signing. Many of the romances feature a military hero and/or heroine, making a military book signing even more appropriate. These signings, which are organized by the Harlequin public relations office, are just another example of the mobility and adaptability of a Harlequin public relations campaign and the ability of Harlequin management to think outside the box.

Direct to Consumer

In early 2002, eHarlequin.com and the Direct Marketing division merged into one group known as the Direct-to-Consumer Group. This new group combines all of the skills of the Internet Group with Harlequin's direct marketing capabilities — from consumer insight to cost-effective customer acquisition. It is expected that the merging of these two groups will provide more choice and convenience to Harlequin's customers through customer development, product development and technology, and by achieving cost savings in the streamlined operation (Harlequin Enterprises Annual Report, 2001).

Direct Mail

In the 1930s to the 1940s, Mills & Boon developed a mail order catalogue system (known as the Reader Service), which informed readers of future publications. However, Harlequin's direct mail efforts were not crystallized until 1973 when the publisher offered a subscription service through which readers could buy each month's publications

by post (Dixon, 1999). Because the cost of paper and postage have significantly increased since the early 1970s and because consumers are inundated with junk mail, today's direct mail efforts are not only more expensive than in years past, but involve more risk as well. As stated by Candy Lee, Harlequin publisher, "the heavy costs in direct to consumer includes intense cash investment to find the customer who wants to buy. Generally through direct mail only 3-5 out of 100 people decide to buy" (as cited in Dyer, 1997, p. 50).

To combat the expense and risk, the Harlequin Reader Service direct mail pieces use strong, vivid, emotional phrases such as "free books," "exciting mystery gift," "no obligation to buy anything," "cancel at anytime," "best new novels at discount prices BEFORE they're available in stores." In addition, the offer is from the editors and appears in script for increased personalization [see Appendix D]. The Reader Service offers the Harlequin customer convenient, dependable and early delivery, and a subscription to *Heart to Heart*, the Reader Service's newsletter.

Once a member of the Harlequin/Silhouette Reader Service, Harlequin uses advanced database techniques to produce specific offerings for members with targeted messages and images. In 2001, the Direct Marketing Group launched the "Diamond Club" loyalty program, aimed at the most loyal of Harlequin's direct-to-home consumers, rewarding long-standing customers with a variety of benefits. This loyalty program has had an extremely positive impact on how well members pay and how long they remain active with Harlequin. The Steeple Hill imprint, Harlequin's inspirational romance for the Christian market, also relies heavily on direct-to-home marketing efforts — in some

part to combat the lack of acceptance from Christian bookstores. Yet another example of the publisher's use of creative IMC strategy.

Internet/Interactive Marketing

In 1996, Harlequin launched *romance.net*, its first attempt at providing Internet-based coverage of its authors and romance novel offerings. Eventually the site evolved to include online book serials, community features, interactive contests, and electronic newsletters. On Valentines Day, 2000, the site was re-launched under the name *eHarlequin.com* [see Appendix E]. In 2001 more than 500,000 new members joined *eHarlequin.com* in North America, viewing over 95 million pages of content. Today, the total membership base is more than one million people and counting. The re-launched site has the expanded purpose of "providing romance lovers with a safe and engaging place to escape the day-to-day pressures of a busy lifestyle, to interact with like-minded romance readers, and to purchase their favorite romance novels with ease and comfort" (Harlequin Enterprises Annual Report, 2001).

The *eHarlequin.com* site also includes relationship-oriented articles, writing tips for aspiring authors, coverage of their 1,300 romance authors (including links to personal home pages), biographies and interviews with more than 400 authors, and the publisher's huge selection of romance novels. Harlequin recognizes that through *eHarlequin.com* that "the Internet is an information source, a communication channel, a transaction vehicle and a distribution tool" (Gronstedt, 2000, p. 211). The *eHarlequin.com* message boards also continue to grow as readers eagerly contribute and share their thoughts on reading and writing Harlequin novels. "Some of the women will actually print out the

messages and hand them to their husbands and say, 'See! Other people keep books after reading them, other people have to-be-read piles'" (Linz, as cited in "this thing called love," 1998, pp. 38-51). Also, the publisher has tapped into keen reader interest in writing a Harlequin or Silhouette novel of their own. The channel called, "Learn to Write," launched in March 2001. One of the features of the channel is a "writing romance thesaurus," created specifically for romance writers.

The online reads also continue to be popular. These serialized stories are exclusive to the site and have proved to be excellent free sampling mechanisms for new and avid readers alike. With the advanced technologies of today, Harlequin has taken this type of interactivity one step further. Readers can visit eHarlequin.com to vote on the direction the plot of an online novel should take from chapter to chapter and can then read the winning outcome the following week. In the Writing Round Robin channel, a guest author writes the first chapter of a novel and members of eHarlequin.com then write the remaining chapters. The winning member's name and chapter are posted on the Harlequin Web site.

In 2001 eHarlequin.com revenues reached \$13.3 million, up 121 percent from 2000, a year burdened with the start-up and marketing costs of the re-launch. To date, eHarlequin.com has successfully built a virtual romance community — a community in which visitors are informed, entertained and connected with others who share a common interest. In the future, management plans to do even more to harness the power of the site — especially to boost sales of its novels.

Chapter IV

SURVEY METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

Design and Development of the Survey

The survey, which was divided into four sections, contains both open and closed-ended questions [see Appendix F]. In Section I, the author primarily uses open-ended questions to better understand respondents' involvement in the romance fiction category as well as their involvement with Harlequin Enterprises. Section II, a measure of respondents' perceptions, includes six "attitudinal" statements that are measured using the Likert scale. The scale comprises a five-point measurement mechanism: Strongly Agree, Agree, No Opinion, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. Each statement expresses a viewpoint concerning a respondent's relationship with, or impression of, Harlequin Enterprises.

Section III is a measure of respondents' perspectives, specifically the ability of Harlequin Enterprises to extend its brand name to product categories beyond book publishing. A checklist of possible brand extensions was presented to survey respondents. Also, this section contains an open-ended question asking respondents, "Why do you read Harlequin/Silhouette books?" Lastly, Section IV is a series of closed-ended questions on respondents' demographics, including age, marital status, level of education and employment status. Parlanee used throughout the questionnaire was carefully crafted to fit the vernacular of the romance reader and to increase resonance with the respondent.

Purpose of the Survey

In general, the purpose of the survey was to better understand readers' perceptions and perspectives regarding Harlequin Enterprises. Specifically, the author wished to assess the effectiveness of the publisher's integrated marketing programs by measuring elements of brand equity such as awareness, associations, loyalty and the feasibility of a brand extension(s).

Section I measured unaided recall or top of mind awareness — the strongest measure of brand awareness — of the Harlequin/Silhouette brands. Since each of the six statements in Section II expressed a viewpoint regarding the impact and brand strength of Harlequin Enterprises, the author's intent was to gain a better understanding of readers' trust in, liking of, and commitment to, the Harlequin/Silhouette brands. This section also delved into whether or not readers' have personified the brand, another measure of brand identity and strength. Finally, the key question in the section measures level of agreement with the statement, "Harlequin Enterprises is the most well-known publisher of series romance" — a direct link to the research question in Chapter I.

The purpose of Section III was to assess whether or not the Harlequin name could be extended to product categories beyond publishing. The section also allowed for further exploration of why women read romance, particularly Harlequin and Silhouette romances. Lastly, the purpose of Section IV was to develop a basic profile of respondents and to compare this profile with the profile revealed in the literature review, which stated, "The romance reader is every woman."

Distribution of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was distributed to three main sample sources: 1) All About Romance Readers List, 2) Contemporary Romance Readers List and 3) New Jersey Romance Writers List. Due to the topic of the study, all respondents are women, ages 18 and older, and readers of romance fiction.

Source One: All About Romance

All About Romance, formerly the Prodigy Romance List, was founded February 22, 1999. This is primarily a readers' list with approximately 900 members. It is a Yahoo Groups list for the discussion of romance novels and can be found at <http://www.likesbooks.com>. At the request of the moderator, the author posted the questionnaire as a Microsoft Word file. Members of the list were sent an e-mail notifying them that a file had been posted to the Web site. Those interested in completing the survey were asked to access the file, complete the questionnaire, and send the completed survey to the author's e-mail address.

Source Two: Contemporary Romance

Contemporary Romance was founded May 12, 2001. This is primarily a readers' list with approximately 140 members. It is a Yahoo Groups list for the discussion of romance novels and can be found at http://www.geocities.com/contemporary_romance. This list is for those who love reading romance novels, especially contemporary romance. For this source, the author e-mailed an electronic version of the questionnaire. Members

of the list were asked to complete the questionnaire, and to send the completed survey to the author's e-mail address.

Source Three: New Jersey Romance Writers of America

New Jersey Romance Writers of America is the state chapter of Romance Writers of America. Founded in 1984, the nonprofit organization is dedicated to providing support, information and resources to writers and published authors of romance fiction. Presently the group has a membership of 250. The New Jersey Romance Writers list is limited to members of the organization. Founded December 5, 1999, the list currently has 186 members. It is important to note that although a list geared toward writers of romance fiction, many of its members also are readers of romance fiction. It is a Yahoo Groups list and can be found at <http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/Gallery/7019>.

In total, 35 questionnaires were completed across the three sample sources.

Analysis of the Survey Results

Section I: Involvement

Respondents reported they read an average of 31 romance novels over a three-month period. This equates to an average of 10 books per month or two books per week. Responses ranged from as few as four romances to as many as 93 romances read in a three-month period. On average, 41 percent of the romances read during the three-month period were Harlequin and/or Silhouette books.

When asked to name the top two publishers of category/series romance today, the overwhelming majority named Harlequin followed by Silhouette books. Write-ins

receiving far fewer mentions included Zebra Books, Simon and Schuster and Avon. The author believes these publishers were named for several reasons: 1) Zebra Books, Kensington's flagship imprint, launched Bouquet romances, a contemporary category romance line, in June 2001. Even though the line is no longer published, it is one of the more recent launches of a romance series by a publisher other than Harlequin Enterprises; 2) Simon and Schuster, the publishing operation of Viacom Inc., published Silhouette books until Harlequin Enterprises purchased the imprint in 1984. Additionally, they publish single-title romances, many of which are written by authors who began their careers writing category/series romance for Harlequin Enterprises; and 3) Avon Books, the romance imprint of Harper Collins, is recognized for having pioneered the historical romance category with its release of the ground-breaking novel, *The Flame and the Flower*.

Results regarding the Reader Service — the subscription service to receive Harlequin/Silhouette romances via the mail on a monthly basis — were mixed. Nearly a quarter (21 percent) of the respondents are current members and one-third are former members. Forty-six percent of the respondents have never been members of the Harlequin/Silhouette Reader Service. Reasons for membership and non-membership vary. Members cite the discount, early receipt and convenience of receiving their romances through the mail as the primary benefits. This is of particular benefit to those respondents who have an affinity to a particular Harlequin and or Silhouette line(s). For example, the romance reader who purchases and reads all of the Silhouette Desires released each month. In this instance, the benefit of membership is clear.

For those who prefer to exercise greater choice and select their Harlequin/Silhouette novels based on author, back-cover description, word of mouth or a “flip-through,” there is less benefit to subscribing to the Reader Service. Some former members also mentioned that they eventually became overwhelmed by the sheer quantity of books mailed to their home every month — on average four to six books per month, per series, or 48-72 books per year, per series.

Section II: Perceptions

Table 4a

Harlequin Enterprises is the most well-known publisher of category/series romance	Strongly Agree	4.64
In general, Harlequin understands readers of romance fiction and meets their reading needs	Agree	4.21
I trust Harlequin Enterprises to publish books I'll enjoy	Agree	3.97
If Harlequin were a woman, she would be among my friends	Agree	3.48
I visit the Harlequin Web site at least once a month	Neutral	3.18
If Harlequin stopped publishing romance fiction tomorrow there are other publishers that could easily replace it	Disagree	1.82

In total, 79 percent of the respondents strongly agreed and 15 percent agreed, "Harlequin Enterprises is the most well-known publisher of category/series romance." This level of agreement coupled with naming Harlequin and Silhouette as the top two publishers of category/series romance on an unaided basis attest to the publisher's brand strength and provide overwhelming support for the research hypothesis.

Nine in ten either strongly agreed (42 percent) or agreed (49 percent) that in general Harlequin understands readers of romance fiction and meets their reading needs. Based on responses to the question, "Why do you read Harlequin/Silhouette books?" [see Appendix G], respondents' needs include, but are not limited to 1) a quick and easy read, 2) a well-written book with good story lines, 3) an entertaining read, and 4) a read that provides escape. As cited by respondents:

"There are enough problems in the world without having to read about them during your leisure time."

"These books entertain and take me away from the world of today."

"When I read, I want to escape the world for a few hours and get lost in a romantic fantasy."

It is important to note that a quick and easy read is the most often mentioned reason for reading Harlequin and Silhouette romances. This makes sense, given the time-crunched, pressure-filled lives of many women of today. Other needs met by Harlequin and Silhouette novels include a selection of romance to suit every type of reader, and of course, a guaranteed happy ending.

Respondents also confirmed that they trust Harlequin to publish books they'll enjoy. Sixty-nine percent either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. The author believes the editorial guidelines as well as the selling line and brand promise of

each series adds to the level of trust respondents place in Harlequin Enterprises.

Additionally, respondents have come to trust the authors, many of whom have written for Harlequin Enterprises for years.

Slightly more than half (52 percent) strongly disagreed and 30 percent disagreed that Harlequin Enterprises could easily be replaced by other publishers. Again, this is a testament to Harlequin Enterprises' brand strength and the integrated marketing efforts employed to create and build the brand equity. Also, it serves to confirm Harlequin's solid position in the publishing marketplace.

It was somewhat of a revelation that despite the positive ratings and depth of feeling concerning reasons for reading Harlequin/Silhouette books, that only half of respondents agreed (24 percent strongly agreed and 24 percent agreed) that if Harlequin were a woman, she would be among their friends. Based on this statistic, the author concludes that despite high awareness and loyalty to Harlequin and Silhouette books, reading romance fiction is considered a form of entertainment. Therefore, respondents were unable to personify the brand. Also, given that there are multiple series across the Harlequin and Silhouette imprints — from sweet romance to hot sensual reads — respondents may have been unable to associate one personality-type with Harlequin Enterprises.

Finally, 51 percent of the respondents reported that they visit the Harlequin Web site at least once a month. Such a positive response may be attributed to the fact that respondents were drawn from web-based samples, and therefore, have access to the Internet and an affinity to the Web.

Table 4b

Harlequin Enterprises is the most well-known publisher of category/series romance	<u>94%</u>	6%
In general, Harlequin understands readers of romance fiction and meets their reading needs	<u>91%</u>	9%
I trust Harlequin Enterprises to publish books I'll enjoy	<u>69%</u>	9%
I visit the Harlequin Web site at least once a month	51%	39%
If Harlequin were a woman, she would be among my friends	48%	18%
If Harlequin stopped publishing romance fiction tomorrow there are other publishers that could easily replace it	12%	<u>82%</u>

Section III: Perspectives

Respondents most often cited greeting cards and a women's magazine as the products they would most likely purchase as a Harlequin brand extension [see Table 4c]. More than likely, these two product categories resonated with respondents because of their ties to the written word and the publishing arena. The author believes the popularity of a women's magazine as a Harlequin brand extension also relates to Harlequin's positioning as a company that "creates entertaining and enriching experiences for women to enjoy, to share, and to return to."

Candles, bath gels and lingerie were also product categories that received positive response from respondents. These categories, while not connected to publishing, are categories with ties to the "romance" industry; thus the connection with Harlequin.

Product categories that did not fare as possible brand extensions were perhaps too far removed from publishing or romance. These categories include jewelry,

cookbooks and travel services. Lack of purchase of activity books/kits for children may have less to do with the compatibility of the brand extension and more to do with the fact that 76 percent of the respondents do not have children 18 or younger at home.

Table 4c

If Harlequin Enterprises extended its brand name to the product categories below, which, if any would you be likely to purchase?

Greeting cards	55%
Women's magazine	48%
Candles	42%
Bath gels	30%
Lingerie	30%
Chocolate	24%
Jewelry	15%
Cookbooks	12%
Travel services	12%
Activity books/kits for children	6%

Section IV: Profile of Respondents [see Table 4d]

Like the typical romance reader, respondents to the survey range in age. One-quarter are under 35 years old, 36 percent are 35-44, 18 percent are 45-54 and 21 percent are 55 and older. Respondents were a mix of single (39 percent) and married women (45 percent). Interestingly, 76 percent reported that they do not have children 18 or younger living at home. This high percentage may be a combination of younger respondents, who are less likely to have children, and older respondents or "empty nesters." These empty nesters may have children who are older and less likely to be living at home. Nearly all of the respondents have at least attended college/technical school, with three in 10 having graduated from a 4-year college and another three in 10 having attended graduate school. Lastly, the majority of respondents are either full- or part-time employed.

Table 4d

Age	Percentage	Education	Percentage
Under 25	6%	Some high school or less	NA
25 - 34	18%	Graduated high school	3%
35 - 44	36%	Attended college/technical school	39%
45 - 54	18%	Graduated 4-year college	30%
55 and older	21%	Graduate school	27%
Martial Status	Percentage	Employment	Percentage
Single	39%	Employed full-time	55%
Married	45%	Employed part-time	18%
Separated or divorced	6%	Unemployed, but looking	3%
Widowed	9%	Homemaker	6%
		Student	9%
No children 18 or younger at home	76%	Retired	9%

Summary of the Survey Results

The survey was well received. Respondents demonstrated a commitment to the romance fiction industry and more importantly, a commitment to Harlequin Enterprises. It was clear on both an aided and unaided basis that Harlequin is the most well-known publisher of series romance and that the publisher could not easily be replaced by another. Additionally, these respondents shared in their agreement that Harlequin understands readers of romance fiction and publishes books readers will enjoy.

As revealed in the literature review and confirmed by the survey results, readers gravitate toward these novels because they provide a quick, well-written read while also offering a few hours of escape from the day to day. In conclusion, survey results also confirmed that the brand equity of Harlequin Enterprises is strong, cementing the publisher's place in the romance fiction marketplace.

Chapter V

THE END - AND THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER

Summary and Conclusions

Through this study the author explored the social and cultural significance of Harlequin Enterprises. She also examined the publisher's use of integrated marketing communications and how this use has led to the publisher's current position as 1) the most well-known publisher of series romance fiction and 2) "the publishing success story of the 20th century" (Dixon, 1999).

Through the literature review, it quickly became apparent that Harlequin Enterprises was, and in many ways, continues to be, an innovative publisher. Although this innovation began in the 1930s, it was crystallized in the 1970s when the publisher adopted a marketing focus and identified itself as a marketing company — a publishing industry first. During that decade, Harlequin 1) applied packaged goods marketing techniques to publishing, 2) crafted editorial guidelines that were market-oriented, ensuring editors knew as much about the customer as marketers, and 3) embraced the concept of branding by marketing the brand name of the publisher rather than individual authors. These three focus areas led to high brand awareness and high levels of brand loyalty — loyalty levels the publisher continues to enjoy thirty years later.

As revealed through the literature review and the survey data, Harlequin's success is the result of many factors. First and foremost, the publisher has maintained its singular focus — romance fiction. Also, they have conveyed a consistent message to consumers. While the message has been tweaked over the years and updated to fit modern tastes, it

remains, in essence, the same message that was presented in its 1974 advertising campaign: "Remember when you first fell in love? Relive that special excitement ... every time you read a Harlequin romance. Come into the world of Harlequin novels ... and be a part of a wonderful dream." This is a message that clearly communicates the "what's in it for me" to the consumer.

Another factor has been the publisher's ability to create and successfully position the "girl-gets-guy story" across 15 branded series. From the beginning Harlequin Enterprises understood that not all romance readers are alike. The publisher successfully targeted the varying segments of the romance market by offering different levels of story complexity and varying degrees of sensuality. Also the positioning and image communicated through the packaging of each branded series has always been clear, concise and consistent. From background color, logo, and cover image to style and size of font.

Harlequin has built relationships with its customers, and cemented these relationships by practicing two-way communication. They have created a unity of effort at every point of contact with key customers and stakeholders. From the public relations campaigns in the 1980s in which they were the first publisher to conduct "reader thank you parties" to the contests and direct-to-consumer promotions of today. In addition, Harlequin has utilized market research to craft its IMC strategies; holding the title as the first publisher to systematically and successfully test consumer response and to gear its products toward its readers.

The publisher's Web site also is a great example of its innovation, two-way communication, and a strong factor of its success. The site successfully conveys the

identity of Harlequin Enterprises, invites involvement into its virtual community, and encourages purchase of books. The site is an integral aspect of the publisher's IMC efforts and it serves to bring all elements of the IMC strategy together. Public relations, advertising, sales promotions and direct-to-consumer elements are all found at eHarlequin.com.

The remaining factors for Harlequin's success have been its ability to successfully induce trial and its realization that romances could be sold in the same places as other consumer products. Today, Harlequin has taken these lessons — learned in the 1960s and 1970s — and is applying them to their Web site and the Harlequin/Silhouette Reader Service. They are using advanced database techniques to target specific offerings to readers with targeted messages and images. They also are using IMC strategy to reach a sub-group of consumers with the 2001 launch of the "Diamond Club," aimed at the most loyal of Harlequin's direct-to-home consumers. Lastly, some 30 years later, buying a Harlequin and/or Silhouette novel is still as easy as buying aspirin.

Recommendations

From the review of the literature and the results of the primary research, the author has four recommendations:

- 1) In the primary research conducted by the author, approximately half of all respondents reported visiting the Harlequin Web site at least once a month. While promising, the author recommends instituting efforts to increase this percent. Compared to other romance fiction sites — perhaps even when compared to all other publishers —

the eHarlequin.com site is second to none. With increased awareness and use of this site, Harlequin Enterprises could enjoy even higher levels of loyalty and product purchase.

Twenty-three percent of Harlequin/Silhouette readers have access to the Internet from their homes. This is 23 percent of 50 million readers; the potential is great. The author recommends increasing the mutual links between Harlequin/Silhouette and their authors along with increased author chat sessions, especially among authors who have a long history with Harlequin and those who write continuities and miniseries. This will serve to increase traffic to the site. There also should be increased marketing and publicity of the eHarlequin.com newsletter in the publisher's books, catalogues, and other promotional materials. Finally, there also may be sponsorship opportunities for the site as well as cause-related marketing opportunities — defined as a commercial activity by which businesses and charities or causes form a partnership with each other to market an image, a product, or service for mutual benefit (Steckel, Simons, Simons & Tanen, 1999, p. 47).

2) The author recommends increased promotion of the Reader Service. The Reader Service should be promoted in every Harlequin and Silhouette book and as suggested by Cole (1999), the publisher also should cultivate house lists — targeting current customers. To identify and target potential customers, the publisher should purchase lists from sources such as *RT Book Club* magazine, Internet lists, Romance Writers of America, and the many readers and writers conferences that take place around the country throughout the year.

3) From the survey data it was revealed that greeting cards and a women's magazine have potential as possible Harlequin/Silhouette brand extensions. Because of

their ties to the written word and the publishing industry, these two product categories resonated with respondents. The author recommends further exploration in the form of concept research and focus groups.

4) According to census projections, the African-American population is expected to grow more than twice as fast as the white population between 1995 and 2020, ultimately reaching a total population of 45.1 million people. In addition, as reported by Target Market News, the number of African-Americans under 35 who were enrolled in college in 1998 was 1.7 million, 50 percent higher than the numbers enrolled a decade earlier. They also reported that in 2001, African-Americans spent \$295 million on the purchase of books (<http://www.targetmarketnews.com/numbers/index.htm>).

Given these statistics, the author recommends the creation of a new series within the Silhouette imprint — a line of books targeting the African-American reader of romance fiction. Despite having a history of addressing changes in the market, addressing cultural and demographic shifts, and publishing *Adam and Eva*, Harlequin has been slow to target the African-American reader. Since there are other romance publishers who have already targeted this segment and because Harlequin has delayed, the author acknowledges that entry into the African-American marketplace may be difficult. To ensure success, Harlequin will have to make up for lost time, and craft unique marketing communications to capture this segment's interest.

It is the author's hope that from the literature review, the primary research results, and the recommendations above, the reader has a better understanding of:

- 1) the social, cultural and marketing significance of Harlequin Enterprises;
- 2) integrated marketing communications and its importance in today's business environment; and
- 3) Harlequin Enterprises' efficacious use of integrated marketing to become the most well-known publisher of series romance fiction.

The author will now turn her attention to future study.

Future Study

As stated in Chapter I, a limitation of this study is that it focused primarily on the Harlequin and Silhouette series imprints, excluding study of Harlequin's single-title and women's fiction imprints. For the 12-month period from September 30, 2000 through September 30, 2001, single-title sales represented 25.6 percent of Harlequin revenues, compared to 6.5 percent in the same period 10 years ago (Milliot, 2002, p. 16). Donna Hayes, president and COO, and the developer of Harlequin's single-title business, has stated that she intends to grow the single-title business to decrease Harlequin's dependence on sales of its romance series.

The publisher also intends to heavily promote its Red Dress Ink imprint. These contemporary books currently represent 5 percent of Harlequin's North American sales. There is certainly room for growth because the contemporary adult fiction market is more than twice as large as the \$1.5 billion (sales) market for traditional romances. "When you

describe us in ten years, you'll say we are the world's dominant player in women's fiction," says Hayes (as cited in Goldman, 2002, p. 151).

Future studies could compare and contrast the integrated marketing communications strategies for Harlequin's series romance versus its single-titles and Red Dress Ink offerings. Moreover, these studies could analyze Harlequin's success or failure in the women's fiction arena as well as the impact of this new direction on Harlequin's series business. Just as past studies have hailed Harlequin as the publishing success story of the *20th century*, perhaps future studies will demonstrate they also are the publishing success story of the *21st century*. Only time will tell.

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Appendices

THE ROMANCE REVOLUTION

Table 1. Paperback Romance Publishing Calendar (1957 through 1985)

Date	1985 titles/month
1957	6
1960	
1960	
1972	
1973	8
1974	
1976	
1976	
1978-80	
1979	
May 1980	6
June 1980	4

Harlequin Romance/Mills and Boon paperback reprints introduced (sweet)

Mistress of Mellyn by Victoria Holt (Fawcett)—nominal beginning of period during which modern gothic romance was most popular in U.S.

Angelique by Sergeanne Golon (Bantam)

The Flame and the Flower by Kathleen Woodiwiss (Avon)

Harlequin Presents line introduced

Sweet Savage Love by Rosemary Rogers

Gothic romance market bottoms out; editors rejecting manuscripts with gothic elements

Harlequin/Pocket Books U.S. distribution arrangement

Peak of popularity of single-title erotic historical romances published by Avon, Ballantine, Dell, Fawcett, Jove, Playboy, Leisure, Ace, Signet, Warner, Pinnacle, Popular Library, and Pocket Books

Richard Gallen/Pocket Books historical romances (erotic) introduced; RC logo on both historical and contemporary beginning Apr. 1981

Silhouette Romance line introduced (sweet)

Harlequin SuperRomance line introduced under Worldwide imprint

NEW RELATIONSHIPS

Table 1. Paperback Romance Publishing Calendar (1957 through 1985)—Continued

Date	1985 titles/month
Dec. 1980	8
June 1981	6
end of 1981	
Feb. 1982	6
Mar. 1982	
June 1982	6
July 1982	
Oct. 1982	2
Oct. 1982	
Nov. 1982	
1981-83	
Jan. 1983	
Apr. 1983	4
May 1983	4
1983	
May 1983	4

Candlelight Ecstasy Romance line introduced by Dell (erotic)

Second Chance at Love line introduced by Jove (erotic)

Most regency romance lines ceased publication

Silhouette Special Edition romance line introduced (erotic)

Circle of Love line introduced by Bantam (sweet)

Silhouette Desire Romance line introduced (erotic)

Love and Life line introduced by Ballantine (erotic)

Pocket Books/Tapestry historical romance line introduced (erotic)

Finding Mr. Right line introduced by Avon (erotic)

Richard Gallen romances dropped by Pocket Books

Harlequin loses half of its American market

Rapture Romance line introduced by NAL (erotic)

Harlequin American Romance line introduced (erotic)

Silhouette Intimate Moments line introduced (erotic)

Circle of Love line dropped by Bantam

Loveswept line introduced by Bantam (erotic)

APPENDIX A

THE ROMANCE REVOLUTION

Table 1. Paperback Romance Publishing Calendar (1957 through 1985)—Continued

	Date	1985 titles/month
Dell Ecstasy Supreme line introduced (erotic)	Aug. 1983	4
Serenade line introduced by Zondervan (sweet-inspirational)	Aug. 1983	4
Finding Mr. Right line dropped by Avon	Fall 1983	
Scarlet Ribbons historical romances introduced by NAL/Signet (erotic)	Fall 1983	
To Have and To Hold line introduced by Berkley/Jove (erotic)	Oct. 1983	
Love and Life line dropped by Ballantine	Jan. 1984	
Silhouette Inspirations line introduced (sweet-inspirational)	Feb. 1984	
Harlequin Temptation line introduced (erotic)	Mar. 1984	4
Harlequin buys Silhouette Books from Simon and Schuster	July 1984	
Velvet Glove line introduced by Avon (erotic-suspense)	July 1984	
Harlequin Intrigue line introduced (erotic-suspense)	Aug. 1984	2
Scarlet Ribbons line dropped by NAL	1984	
Promises (name changed from Cherish) line introduced by Thomas Nelson (sweet)*	1984	2
Popularity of erotic historical romances on the rise again	mid-1984	
To Have and To Hold line dropped by Berkley/Jove	Jan. 1985	
Rapture Romance line dropped by NAL	Feb. 1985	

NEW RELATIONSHIPS

Table 1. Paperback Romance Publishing Calendar (1957 through 1985)—Continued

	Date	1985 titles/month
Silhouette Inspirations line dropped	June 1985	
Old regency romance lines reappear (Fawcett, NAL/Signet) along with two new "sexy" regency romance lines (Warner and Zebra)	1985	
Velvet Glove line dropped by Avon	Dec. 1985	
Dropped in 1986		

the process. When market research in the early 1980s showed that teenagers were reading Harlequin Romances and Barbara Cartland stories, publishers quickly created young adult romance lines for this newly identified and very large audience. By 1984, young adult romances (around a hundred new titles per year, including Dell's Young Love, Silhouette's First Love, and Bantam's Sweet Dreams) reportedly constituted half the entire young adult market.

According to John Cawelti (1976, 35), the formula story functions "to enable its audiences to explore in fantasy the boundary between the permitted and the forbidden and to experience in a carefully controlled way the possibility of stepping across this boundary." In the case of the paperback romance, at least during the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s, it was in large measure the audiences—the composition of which was changing, as were the individuals themselves—who determined what territory was being explored and what was to be permitted or forbidden. Whether or to what extent readers actually stepped across one boundary after another in actions, attitudes, or both, the erotic romance has been an important voice in the social dialogue responsible for raising the consciousness of millions of women during this period.

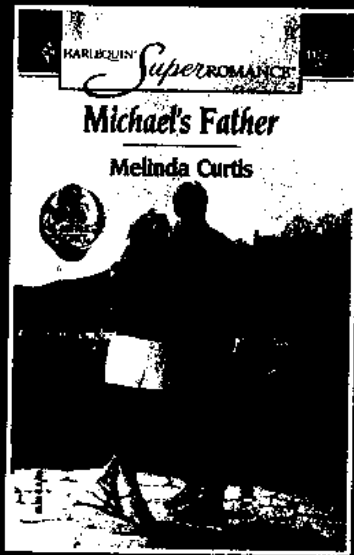
Notes

1. A rarely mentioned additional savings accrues to the company from reduced royalty payments as well, since authors' royalty rates are significantly lower on book club sales than on retail store sales, even when the book club is

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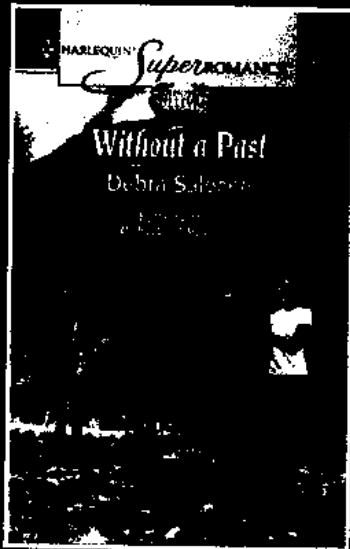


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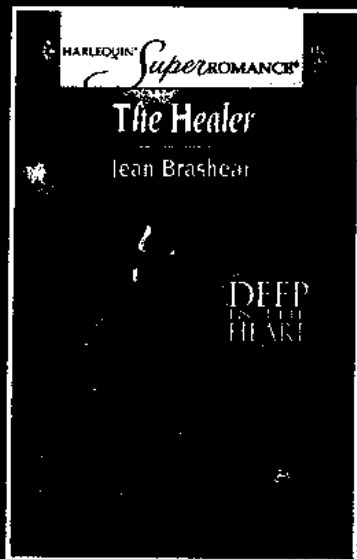


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- #872 INTO THE FIRE** Leslie Kelly
Heat
 The only thing columnist Lacey Clark dislikes more than fellow columnist Nate Logan is her own boring existence. She's dying to be spontaneous, spirited...sexy. So when she meets a gorgeous stranger at a party and falls in lust at first sight, she decides she'll never have a better chance to go for it. Only, she never guesses that her perfect lover is also her worst enemy....

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- books**: Features 'Today's Pick: The Bridgeman's Boy by Rebecca Winters Harlequin' with a book cover image and a 'shop for books' button.
- deal of the week**: Promotes 'DANGEROUS LOVE' with a 'More Deals' link.
- choose a book**: Lists various Harlequin series including 'Harlequin American Romance', 'Harlequin Black', 'Harlequin Dark', 'Harlequin Historical', 'Harlequin Intimacy', and 'Harlequin Love'. Below this is a 'magazine' link.
- what's new**: Dated 'Wednesday, March 5, 2002', it offers a 25% discount on books and features 'In Too Deep' by Teri Carrington. A quote from a 'More Online Reader' says: 'Alannah thinks Ben deserves more than she can give him — but she doesn't want to give him up. Read In Too Deep.' There is also a 'More Online Reads' link.
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Dear Survey Participant:

This survey is being conducted as part of a graduate thesis project to satisfy the requirements of the Master of Arts in Corporate and Public Communication at Seton Hall University. The topic of the research project is Harlequin Enterprises' use of integrated marketing communication.

Your thoughts and opinions are extremely valuable to me. You are among a select group of women who were carefully chosen to receive this survey. All survey responses will be kept confidential.



If you wish to know the results of the survey, a presentation of the research findings will be given in May, 2003, in the Walsh Library at Seton Hall University.

Thank you for your assistance.

Please return the completed survey to:

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I. Your Involvement

1. Who do you think are the top two publishers of category/series romance today?

2. Approximately how many romance novels have you read in the last three months? _____

3. What percentage of those novels were either Harlequin/Silhouette books? _____ %

4. Are you currently a member of the Harlequin/Silhouette Reader Service?

₁ Yes ₂ No, but used to be a member ₃ No, have never been a member

II. Your Perceptions

Using the scale below, please **CIRCLE** your level of agreement with the following statements:

SA= Strongly Agree A=Agree N=No Opinion D=Disagree SD=Strongly Disagree

- | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|---|---|----|
| 1. I trust Harlequin Enterprises to publish books I'll enjoy | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 2. If Harlequin stopped publishing romance fiction tomorrow there are other publishers that could easily replace it | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 3. In general, Harlequin understands readers of romance fiction and meets their reading needs | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 4. If Harlequin were a woman, she would be among my friends | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 5. Harlequin Enterprises is the most well-known publisher of category/series romance | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 6. I visit the Harlequin Web site <i>at least</i> once a month | SA | A | N | D | SD |

III. Your Perspectives

1. If Harlequin Enterprises extended its brand name to the product categories below, which, if any, would you be likely to purchase?

First, please ✓ CHECK all of the products you would be likely to purchase if made by Harlequin Enterprises.

Second, CIRCLE the ONE product you would most likely purchase if made by Harlequin.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chocolate | <input type="checkbox"/> Greeting cards |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Women's magazine | <input type="checkbox"/> Bath gels |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jewelry | <input type="checkbox"/> Lingerie |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Activity books/kits for children | <input type="checkbox"/> Cookbooks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Candles | <input type="checkbox"/> Travel services |

2. Why do you read Harlequin/Silhouette books? _____

IV. Your Profile

1. Age: ₁ Under 25 ₂ 25-34 ₃ 35-44 ₄ 45-54 ₅ 55-64 ₆ 65 and older

2. Marital Status: ₁ Single ₂ Married ₃ Separated or divorced ₄ Widowed

3. Children 18 or younger living at home: ₁ Yes ₂ No

4. Education:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₁ Some high school or less | <input type="checkbox"/> ₄ Graduated 4-year college |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₂ Graduated high school | <input type="checkbox"/> ₅ Graduate school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₃ Attended college/technical school | |

5. Employment:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₁ Employed full-time | <input type="checkbox"/> ₄ Homemaker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₂ Employed part-time | <input type="checkbox"/> ₅ Student |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₃ Unemployed, but looking for work | <input type="checkbox"/> ₆ Retired |

FEEL FREE TO USE THE BACK PAGE FOR ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS — OVER ➡

Why do you read Harlequin/Silhouette books?

Respondent #1 - They are fun to read, quick and easy. Love the happy endings. The characters are larger than life, especially the heroes. Especially like the Harlequin and Silhouette continuity series because get to read about siblings, friends, catch up with characters from earlier books.

Respondent #2 - Good story lines.

Respondent #4 - Quick reading and always a happy ending.

Respondent #5 - I enjoy the combination of romance and suspense. Good character development.

Respondent #7 - Escape. Makes me feel very good when I complete a novel; a sense of euphoria - all is right with the world. In love with romance, happy endings. Enjoy the excitement and danger also.

Respondent #9 - Because they are one of the largest, most pervasive publishers. They're willing to occasionally go a little further than a publisher who doesn't focus almost exclusively on romance. For example, in the 80's they published a book featuring a heroine coming out of an abusive relationship.

Respondent #10 - These books entertain and take me away from the world of today. They are fast-paced, well-written by authors I enjoy. I will surely miss Nora Roberts not writing for them. Harlequin Enterprises writes lines of category romance to suit every type of reader's need from sweet to Blaze. I myself prefer Desire, Intimate Moments, Intrigue, some Blaze and Special Edition. My theory is that if we read more romance there would be a lot more happy women in this country. A problem is the availability of the books in bookstores. Some bookstores, in particular Barnes and Noble and Borders

(Borders is the better of the two), do not carry the lines from Harlequin and can't be bothered to change the books on time. I realize this can be solved by joining the Harlequin Reader Service, but sometimes I don't want to read all the author's books that come out in a line. I like being able to choose.

Respondent #11 - They're short, fast-paced and character driven. There is a Harlequin/Silhouette book for everyone's tastes all the time.

Respondent #12 - Guaranteed happy ending and fast, quality read.

Respondent #13 - Some of my favorite authors write Silhouette/Harlequin books. The stories are fun. I can read them quickly and they have some of my favorite themes in romance. I think that the story lines and characters have gotten better over the years.

Respondent #14 - Because they are fun and sweet. When I read I want to escape the world for a few hours and get lost in a romantic fantasy.

Respondent #15 - Because sometimes they'll publish stuff I'm interested in.

Respondent #16 - For the authors I like.

Respondent #17 - Because some authors who write for Harlequin/Silhouette are those I read, because for these authors only I am usually guaranteed at least an "okay" read, and because the books are sometimes the perfect length for what I'm wanting - a quick and easy read.

Respondent #18 - I don't read them any longer. I used to read them when I worked full time because they were short and easy to read quickly. Now that I'm retired, I read longer books, although still mostly romance novels.

Respondent #19 - I enjoy them and they're well written on the whole.

Respondent #20 - Happily ever after, there are enough problems in the world without having to read about them during your leisure time. Good stories. Shortness and ease of reading.

Respondent #21 - They are easy to read and short. I laugh and cry with the characters.

Respondent #22 - Quick, satisfying reads that do not require a lot of concentration or thought from me when I am stressed or in a reading slump.

Respondent #23 - For fun!

Respondent #25 - I know their authors and what kind of stories I will enjoy. The books are quick reading, upbeat and often well-written. Some of the settings and plots also provide information and facts I did not know before.

Respondent #27 - I respect the name and they are very up to date with women's issues and the way women of today think.

Respondent #28 - I read them because I hope to publish with them someday. I read romance because I like strong women who show their strengths in unique ways and conquer some of their faults while doing so.

Respondent #29 - They meet a need for the kind of fiction many women want to read. Romantic, easy to read, not challenging. This is especially true for women like my mother, who don't read books otherwise. Also to learn what they are publishing. Most of their stories are not "big enough" for my reading tastes.

Respondent #30 - Well-written, fast-paced stories about strong women and decent men.

Respondent #31 - Sensual, emotional stories.

Respondent #32 - They are well-written with believable characters.

Respondent #33 - Because the Blaze and Brava lines are hot.