

Summary

In this thesis I explore the domain of *Harlequin Enterprises*, the publishing house of romantic fiction, and the company's publication and its marketing strategies. I also look at the Icelandic market of romantic fiction and examine the readership of the Icelandic readers of brand-name romantic fiction. I seek to establish who the Icelandic readers are, explain the need that women fulfil by reading these books and why novels of romantic fiction are as popular as they are.

In the first part, I introduce the genre of romantic fiction. Each novel of this genre allows the readers to experience the emotional turmoil found within the novel and the satisfaction that in the end the couple will share each other's future. The novels of the genre are formulaic, meaning that the novels have to follow certain patterns. In this thesis, I will concentrate my efforts on brand-name romantic fiction, which are novels published to patterns preconceived by publishing houses. I also examine the tradition of romantic fiction in Iceland.

In the second part, I first explore the production of brand-name romantic fiction. The relationship between the readers of romantic fiction is not only between the readers and the authors but also the publishers. The marketing strategies of *Harlequin Enterprises* turned the genre of romantic fiction into a commercial industry. These marketing methods were not new but had not been used to market books. The company placed emphasis on marketing brands rather than works of individual authors. The standardized looks, content and length were supposed to create brand-fidelity and consequently, the readers would be guaranteed similar novels within the same series of *Harlequin Enterprises*. Secondly, since the publishing house of *Harlequin Enterprises* is predominant in the market of romantic fiction. I wanted to examine various markets of the company: the North American, the British and the Icelandic.

In the last part, I examine the readership of brand-name romantic fiction. First I examine how the cover, the title and the blurb are used as marketing strategies within the genre of romantic fiction. The covers are considered to attract the readers, the titles entice them and the blurbs seal the deal. Secondly, I examine the readership of brand-name romantic fiction in Iceland. I wanted to establish who the readers are, why they read romantic fiction and what their reading habits are like.

In conclusion, I believe that novels of romantic fiction are one form of entertainment. The industry of romantic fiction continues to grow and I believe that the popularity of the genre can be explained by the fact that it allows its readers to escape into fantasy, to put their daily troubles behind them momentarily. I think that the main reason for why the readers read the genre is because it is relaxing. Furthermore, it is my belief that the market of romantic fiction will continue to grow in the future and the variety of sub-genres will continue to emerge.