

Doctor Who: The Unfolding Event: Marketing, Merchandising and Mediatizing a Brand Anniversary

Matt Hills

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Brand anniversaries have become a regular part of today's popular culture, yet they have received surprisingly little analysis. Doctor Who: The Unfolding Event takes the BBC's flagship science fiction TV programme, and its 50th anniversary in 2013, as a case study. Anniversaries involve the proliferation of 'paratexts', e.g. trailers, merchandise, and conventions; this book considers how these paratexts can relate to one another, as well as being incoherent or ambiguous rather than cueing textual meanings. It tackles the brand anniversary as a 'popular media event' that is pre-planned and yet can also be contingently disrupted. Analysing how Doctor Who's 50th worked as a 'BBC metonym', and how 'public service consumption' has contributed to the BBC's cultural reproduction rather than harming its distinctive ethos, this study demonstrates that brand anniversaries are about asserting contemporary relevance. Doctor Who's 50th achieved this via an innovative 3D cinema/TV simulcast. Rather than dismissing anniversaries as commercial 'pseudo-events', we need to take their bids for cultural value more seriously.



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