

The King is Dead! Why People Still Visit Elvis' Graceland.

As a Memphian (that's Southern for "from Memphis,") I've always been amazed how after 25 years, people still flock here to Memphis from all over the world to visit Elvis Presley's gravesite and home, Graceland. Aren't you? Well, last month I stumbled upon a book in the University Library entitled, "Marketing to the Mind," by Maddock and Fulton. One of the insightful essays describes the research the authors conducted to find out why people still visit Graceland. In fact it is the most visited "house" in America, after the White House.

During the research most people rationalized about their "relationship" with the King.

"He was a good man"

"He was a good singer"

"He loved his mother"

"He was just a poor country boy who made it big"

"It's not true he was on drugs"

"Just to pay our respects"

"I wanted to feel closer to him, even though he's dead"

According to Maddock and Fulton, "there is not much here that would explain getting on a plane and traveling 6,000 miles to Memphis to visit a deceased person's grave!. The motivation was found in the visitors' unconscious minds.

And not only that, it's a spiritual thing.

Think about this. What are the standard entrapments of organized religion?

Life after death, resurrection, denial, worship, testimonials, impersonators, pilgrimages, elevation to the status of King, icons, souvenirs, candlelight vigils, etc.

All of these came into being after Elvis' death.

During his life, Elvis broke down many cultural barriers with his music. People gawked at him as he contorted, distorted, twisted and shouted his way to stardom. Giving his fans permission to experience their sexual inhibitions openly.

Stay with me now!

In the "Revival Years (1968-77) he began singing patriotic and religious songs, igniting the spiritual survival instinct latent in every person. According to the authors, " He took what had started as a curse and turned it into a blessing." Now he was on the way to being the "King."

At his death on August 16, 1977, Elvis' elevated his appeal to King by fast becoming a martyr. The popularity of his music and his recordings grew exponentially. The size of his estate grew and his home became a major tourist attraction. He had successfully healed the painful rift in the nation's soul between sex and spirituality.

What does this have to do with marketing?

Nothing and Everything. Think about it.

Marketing is about motivation. People are motivated to buy from you for hundreds of reasons. One of the major categories of motives is called "spiritual motivation and survival."

Motives like "fear of failure," "fear of success," love, permanence, perfection, family values, memberships, right/wrong, inner peace. Elvis today, even in his death provides membership, permanence, love and inner peace in a world still clinging desperately to the hope he (what he stands for) is still alive!

Tap into spiritual motivation and survival. Study it, embrace it, use it in your advertising and marketing and perhaps you could even revive a "dead" product or service someday!

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