

ever being understood. We wait breathlessly during cliff-hangers and suspense thrillers. We wonder about conspiracy theories and unsolved mysteries: The Shroud of Turin. Area 51. From the Bermuda Triangle to crop circles, we're obsessed with certain phenomena specifically because we can't explain them.

### The Attraction of Anticipation

Neuroscientists explored the science behind anticipation in a simple experiment. They examined brain scans of monkeys eyeing a luscious treat: a grape. Each monkey's brain was stimulated by the sight of the grape, and it became even more stimulated as the monkey held the grape, ready to eat it. However, its sense of reward didn't increase when the monkey ate the grape; it actually decreased. Maximum pleasure occurred at the moment of getting the desired object, rather than at the moment of consuming it.

The conclusion: as a motivator, anticipation is stronger than fulfillment.

If customers aren't returning to your website, or if millennials are bored by your same old story, it might be time to take a step back and build intrigue. Sometimes the chase really can be more exciting than the prize.

### Don't Kiss and Tell

Too much information is, well, TMI. Like too much cleavage. Too much tongue. Ewww. Make it stop.

Confidentiality is rare. We're living in a time of kiss-and-tell and tell-alls. A time when starlets race the tabloids to announce their own exposés. When companies confess to problems before the bloggers expose them. And then there's the Internet, which leaves little to the imagination.

Successfully mysterious people and groups limit access. They maintain control by making people feel special to be "on the inside." When people feel that they're part of a select few, they're

more committed. And they make all those people on the outside want to get inside, to see what all the fuss is about.

### Surprises, Suspense, and Spoiler Alerts

How much is a surprise worth?

Some brands can charge more for ordinary products simply because they build a surprise into the purchase experience. By heightening a delicious sense of anticipation and suspense, these brands don't spellbind by spelling out every detail, but rather, by eliminating certain details entirely.

### Whatever and Anything

When we buy certain products, we're actually paying for something else entirely.

Imagine buying a can of soda, and having no idea what it will taste like. Only after that first swig will you find out what you're actually drinking. Open a can of Whatever, and you'll soon discover whether you're sipping grape tea, chrysanthemum tea, or one of the other four flavors. Pop open a can of Anything to find out if you'll be drinking cola, apple soda, or root beer.\*

### A Box of Mystique

What makes Loot Crate so fascinating isn't what's inside the box, but the moment of opening the box. "Unboxing" is the trend of unpacking new products on video.

Loot Crate might seem like a loony premise. Each month the company sends subscribers a box of gaming and geek gear, anything from T-shirts to comic books. The exact contents are a surprise. To heighten Mystique, Loot Crate teases consumers by releasing videos of people unboxing the month's package.

\* Now when you ask guests what they'd like to drink, if they respond "whatever" or "anything," you can actually serve them Whatever or Anything.