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Meyer v Rowling: Did Stephenie Meyer's Twilight outsell JK Rowling's Harry Potter?

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Introduction

J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series is a longstanding sales phenomenon. The Potter Empire was firmly established as the leader of the pack until recently when another teen fantasy series with Hollywood appeal reportedly outsold the 2007 revenue of Rowling's books. Stephenie Meyer's Twilight Saga has much in common with Potter—both are directed at a young adult audience, both have had crossover success in the adult market, and both have been adapted into wildly popular major motion pictures.

Despite the similarities, each series carries its own sales pattern. In 2007, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* inspired a frenzy of sales and within 2 weeks sold 53% of volume and 63% of value for all Potter books for the whole year. As we'll see, most of these sales were from *the Deathly Hallows*. Meanwhile, in 2008, the two weeks following release of the much anticipated *Breaking Dawn* by Stephenie Meyer saw only 11% of volume and 13% of value sold for the Twilight Saga for the year. But sales continued, not only for the new edition, but for the entire Twilight series, even seeing a huge Christmas spike that gave the three older titles their bestselling weeks ever.

So what made the Twilight saga seem to be more popular than Potter? This study seeks to explore the conditions around this trend, and includes:

- Sales by volume: how many Meyer units were sold in 2008 compared to Rowling units in 2007
- Sales by value: total revenue generated by Meyer in 2008 compared to revenue generated by Rowling in 2008.
- Market share: how big was each author's piece of the market in their respective studied years

Approach

We began our evaluation of Harry Potter and the Twilight Saga by comparing similar sales periods. In 2007, we saw the release of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Rowling's highly anticipated seventh and final Harry Potter novel, as well as the release of the fifth Potter movie, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. Throughout 2008, the Twilight saga saw comparable releases with the fourth book, *Breaking Dawn*, hitting shelves just a few months before the Twilight film series' self-titled debut.

We then compiled the sales of all binding types for each series, with the exception of audio books, to get a total sales volume for and value for all titles on sale during these periods (Potter in 2007, Twilight in 2008). Using that total, we calculated each author's share of the total market and Juvenile Fiction market, both by volume and value. We also charted the sales data for the *Deathly Hallows* and *Eclipse*, Meyer's third book, which were both released around the same time. For a more expansive view, we charted a two year span, starting shortly before the books were released in 2007 to the end of January 2009.

As a final experiment, we took a look at two books by Meyer (*The Host*) and Rowling (*The Tales of Beedle the Bard*) that are not directly part of their respective series. Again, we charted volume and value for both titles.

Caveats

- Based on publisher feedback, it is estimated that BNC SalesData represents about 75% of book industry sales. In the remaining 25% are some non-traditional retailers and retail categories that are not fully represented by BNC SalesData. Sales from these categories may not be as accurately represented in this study
 - It is estimated that recent data has increased by approximately 5%, due to new retailers signing on to SalesData in 2008. This will add some sales to the Meyer titles, as there are more stores reporting than for Rowling in 2007.
 - BNC SalesData has been tracking Canadian book sales since October of 2005. Because of the limited historical data, it was not possible for us to track revenue generated by the entire Harry Potter backlist.
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Volume and Value Graphs

While the sales trajectory of both Potter and Twilight – starting slowly and experiencing a major spike when a new book is released – is similar, there are many ways in which sales of the two series' are unique:

- The sales spike for the release of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* peaked at 163,724 units (\$7,354,236.25) the week it was published, which is more than three times the 46,921 units (\$1,125,634.79) sold at the release of *Breaking Dawn*.
- Potter's sales for the year were based entirely around the release of the new book. The first two weeks of sales for *the Deathly Hallows*, JK Rowling's books sold 53% of volume and 63% of value for the entire year. 90% of the sales for those two weeks were for *the Deathly Hallows*.
- While Rowling had a massive sales spike for the release of the final installment in her series, Meyer sold more copies of her backlist. During the first week of *Deathly Hallows* release, the entire Harry Potter backlist sold 14,625 (\$380,588.81) books combined while Meyer's backlist sold 32,418 (\$534,671.82) copies. This is given more weight considered that Potter has six prior titles, while Meyer has only three.
- The release of the *Twilight* movie affected sales of that title more than the release of the *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* film affected Potter titles. In the two weeks following the release of Twilight, the book sold 71,987 units, while in the same period following the release of the Potter movie, the corresponding book sold 5,416 units.
- In the first week of December 2008, Meyer's Twilight saga sold almost three times as many units (110,103 – all books combined) as the entire Harry Potter series sold the entire month of December in 2007 (34,762 – all books combined).

Weekly Sales Analysis Chart

	Harry Potter 2007		Twilight 20008	
	Value	Volume	Value	Volume
Median Week Sales	\$77,803.11	3,275	\$232,539.61	14,614
Average Week Sales	\$414,208.47	11,223	\$505,888.27	27,459
Best Week	\$7,734,824.76	178,349	\$2,521,705.53	146,107
Slowest Week	\$20,881.11	1,308	\$44,757.05	2,495

This chart represents all sales for each respective series' books for each year. It includes all new releases that are specific to each author's series. These numbers do not include JK Rowling's *Tales of Beedle the Bard* or Stephenie Meyer's *The Host* or any film or other media related books, except for movie tie-in editions of the novels. This is true for all the graphs that follow unless otherwise stated.

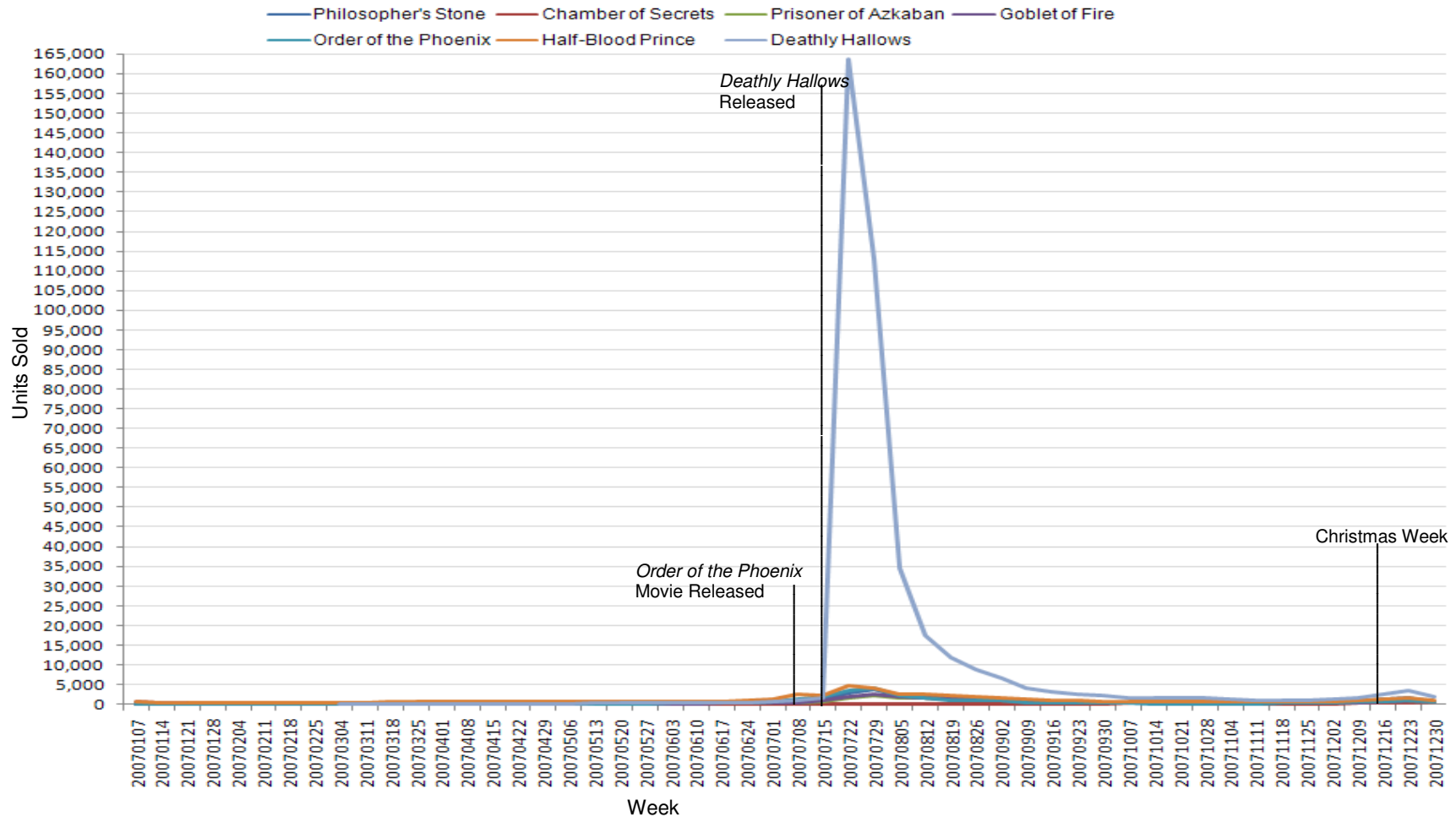
Twilight leads the median sales and average weekly sales categories. Twilight especially dominates the volume category, even coming close with its best week compared with Potter's.

We can detect patterns in the sales of each series by taking a closer look at their week to week sales in the following graphs.

*Each of the following volume and value graphs will be followed by a smaller-scale "Blowup" of lesser sales.

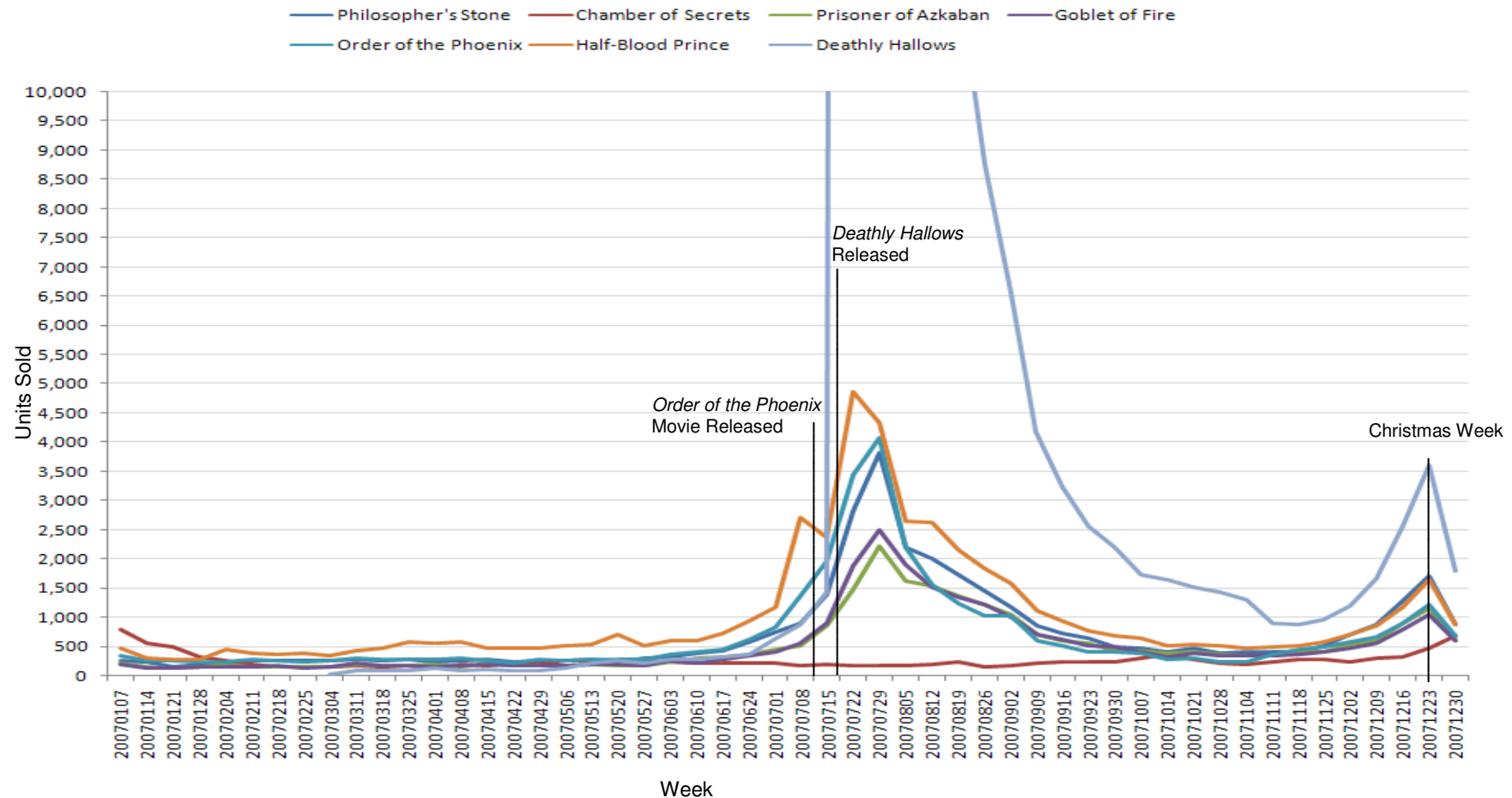
Rowling Sales Volume

2007



The *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* created an incredibly large sales spike upon its release. During the 4 weeks after the release of the *Deathly Hallows*, the weekly average sales for all books not including *Deathly Hallows* is only 2,159. The average for just *Deathly Hallows* was 82,167. The sales average for the Harry Potter series including all books for the same four weeks was 13,588 titles per week.

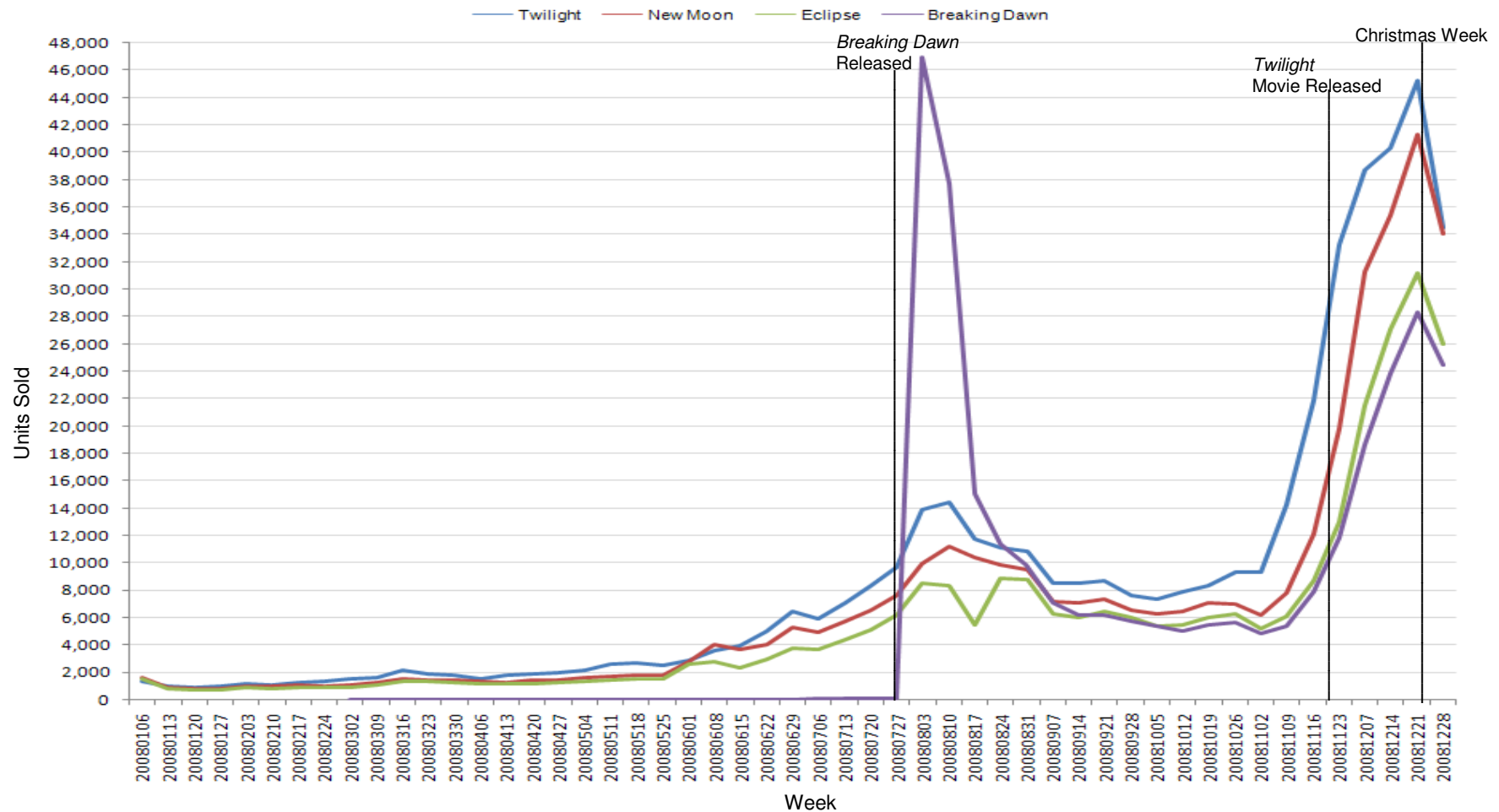
2007 – Rowling Volume Blow-up



In December, a time when Juvenile Fiction sales were three times the median, the Potter books saw only a very small sales spike, even in comparison to the Potter backlists' July and August sales. During December 2007, total sales for the combined JK Rowling list including *Deathly Hallows* was 30,347 with a weekly average of 1,084 units sold per title, well below the overall year average of 1,639 books sold per week.

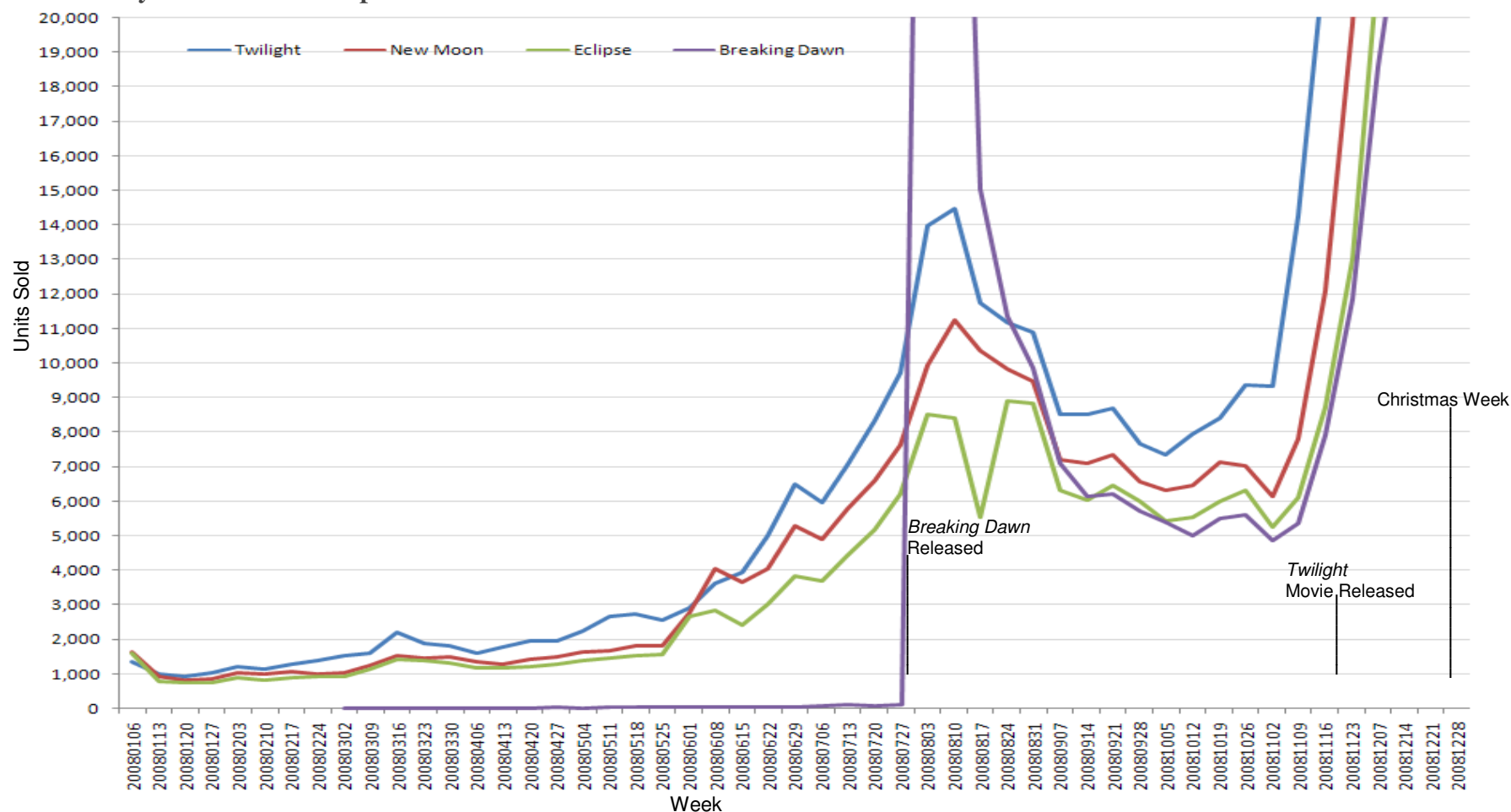
Meyer Sales Volume

2008



For *Twilight*, the entire backlist had a large impact on overall sales of the series. Before *Breaking Dawn* was released, the series was already selling well, averaging 2,442 units a week per backlist title before the launch. During the first four weeks of release, the three backlist books experienced a large spike in sales, average 10,337 books a week. Including *Breaking Dawn*, that average became 14,689 units per week. The weekly average for *Breaking Dawn* was 27,744.

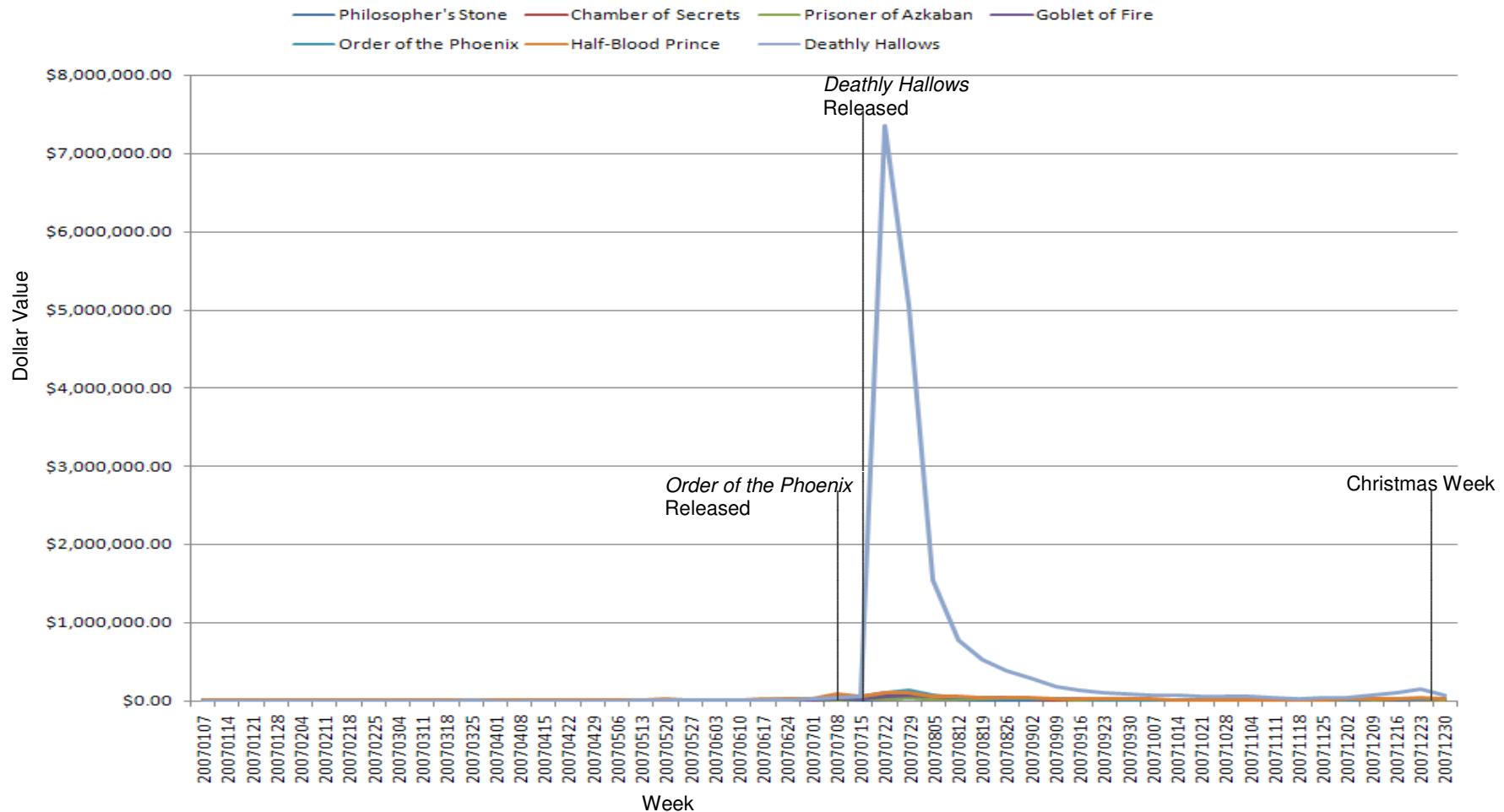
2008 – Meyer Volume Blow-up



December of 2008 was a banner month for the Twilight Saga. With the release of the movie during the last week of November, all books saw a massive sales spike. *Twilight*, *New Moon*, and *Eclipse* all had their best sales weeks ever, and including *Breaking Dawn*, saw a weekly average of 31,370 units per title per week during December. For the year, the Twilight Saga had a weekly sales average of 14,637 books per title.

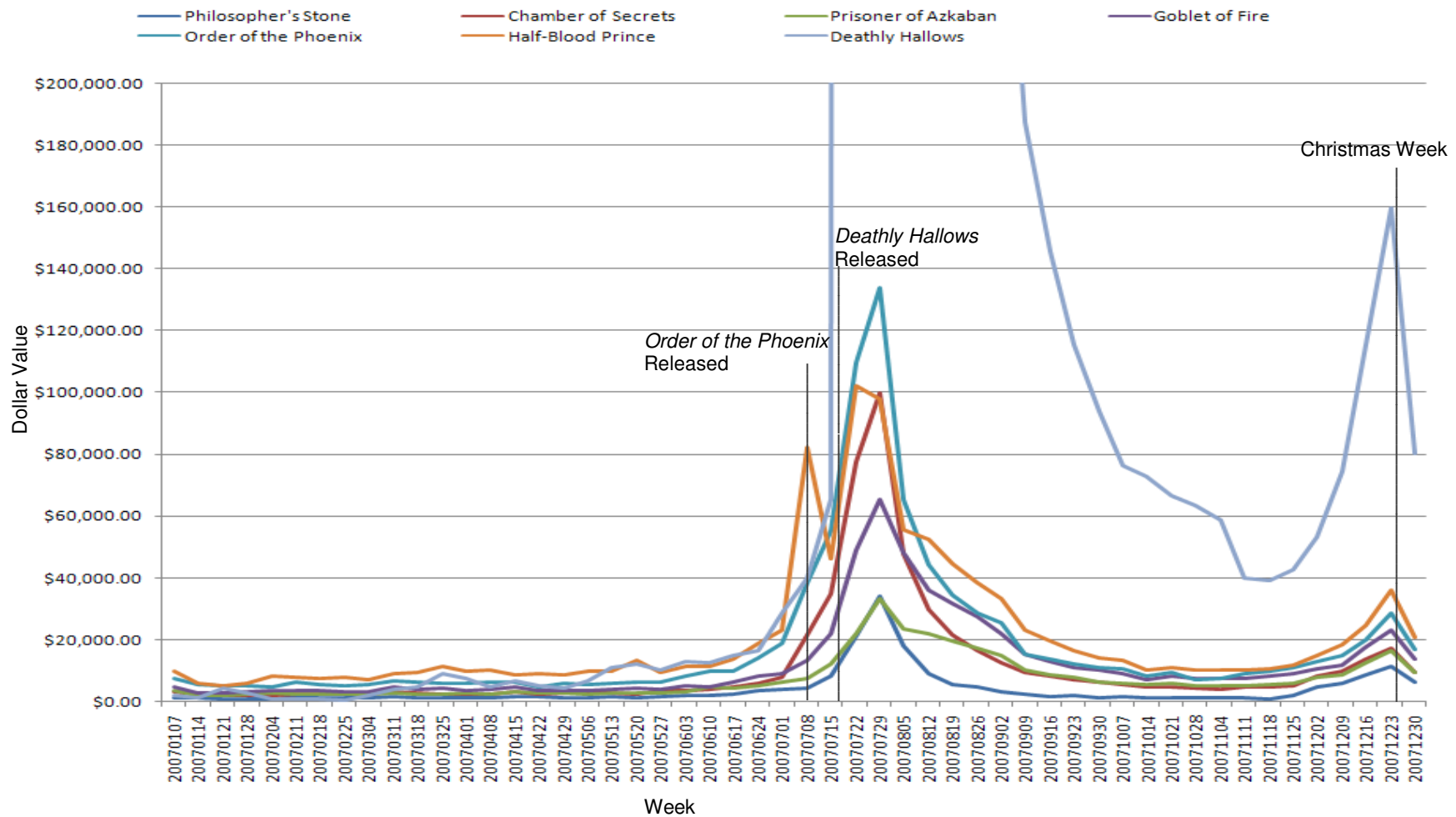
Rowling Sales Value

2007



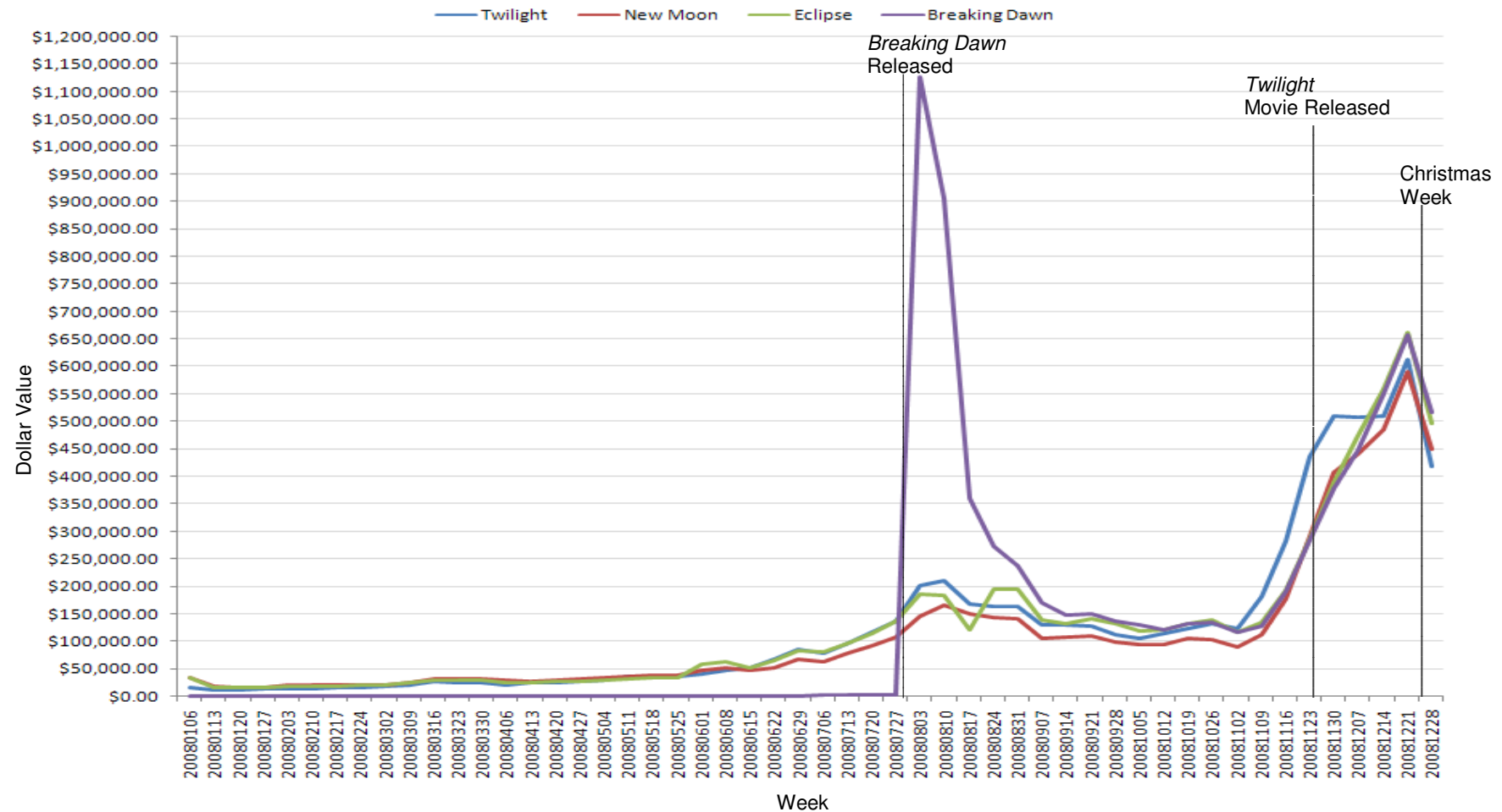
Sales value is the captivating category in the wizarding world, with a \$45 price tag, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* gave Twilight a definite run for its money. The first four weeks after the release of *Deathly Hallows* saw the series earn \$16,046,616.36. Of course, this stupendous number is entirely the doing of *Deathly Hallows*, with \$14,750,526.25 worth of sales. The other six titles combined brought in \$1,296,090.11 during those four weeks.

2007- Rowling Value Blow-up



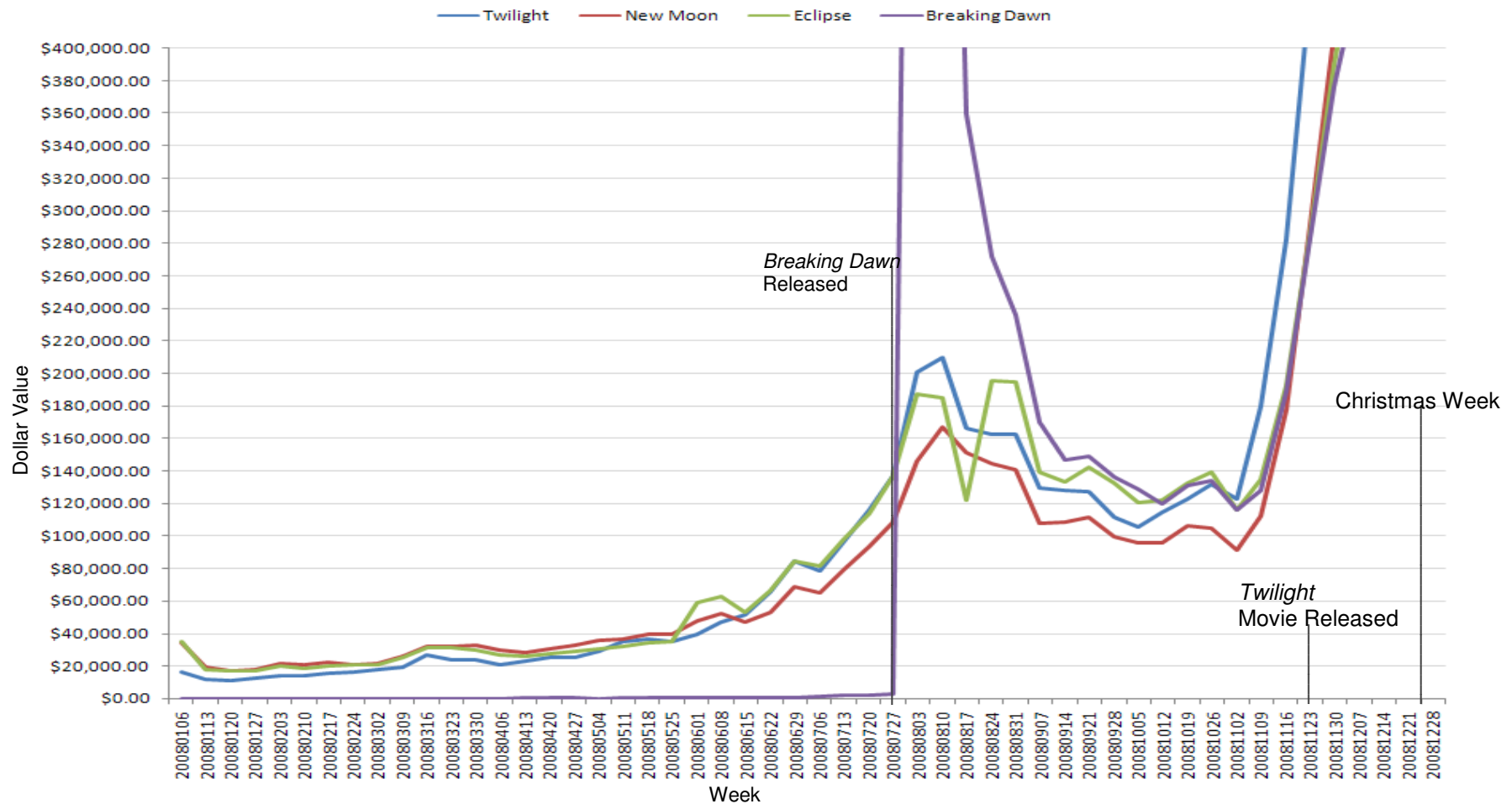
During those first four weeks, the average weekly sales of \$54,003.75 without the champion final Potter book. With all seven books included, the weekly sales average significantly rose to \$573,093.44. After those four weeks, Harry fell off the broom. The average weekly sales value for the four weeks after that was \$67,498.82 for all titles and 2,019 books sold per title. The Christmas season averaged \$28,792.36 per title per week during the month of December.

Meyer Sales Value 2008



The Twilight Saga was just getting started. After the release of *Breaking Dawn*, with weekly sales per title averaging \$293,891.36(14,689 units), the books continued to fare well. The next four weeks saw a bit of a drop in average sales per unit with \$145,504.14 (7,794 units) being the average unit sales by value, still admirable. Sales held steady for another couple of months when the release of the film version of *Twilight* set off another massive sales spike, this time for all four titles.

2007- Meyer Value Blow-up



With the release of the *Twilight* movie and the holiday season, Meyer's books became hot property and sales took off. The Twilight Saga value for all sales of all four books in December was \$8,374,008.89. Each title averaged \$523,375.56 a week. As opposed to Potter's 63% during the opening week of the latest book, Twilight Saga made 36% of its sales for 2008 during the month of December.

Market Share

Overall, each book represented a significant portion of not only the juvenile book market, but the total Canadian book market as a whole. The tables below show what percentage of the Juvenile Fiction market, and the Total Market in Canada were made up by books of either series. As well, we've included percentages for each of the Holiday Seasons around the peak of each series' popularity. These numbers include all of the Harry Potter books, as well as all Twilight books involved in the series. Not included in the following charts are Stephenie Meyer's *The Host* and JK Rowling's *The Tales of Beedle the Bard*, although these books will be discussed later in this study.

Juvenile Fiction Market Share

	Juvenile Market (2007)	Harry Potter (2007)	Juvenile Market (2008)	Twilight Saga (2008)
Value	\$139,827,093.22	\$21,538,840.58	\$167,119,051.36	\$26,306,190.15
Percentage of Total Value		15.40%		15.74%
Volume	10,763,932	611,069	13,617,421	1,502,422
Percentage of total Volume		5.68%		11.03%

Total Market Share (all books sold)

	Total Market (2007)	Harry Potter (2007)	Total Market (2008)	Twilight Saga (2008)
Value	\$883,735,685.06	\$21,538,840.58	\$955,731,619.37	\$26,306,190.15
Percentage of Total Value		2.44%		2.75%
Volume	48,710,813	611,069	54,951,128	1,502,422
Percentage of Total Volume		1.25%		2.74%

Juvenile Market Share – Holiday Season

	Total Market (2007)	Harry Potter (2007)	December (2008)	Twilight Saga (2008)
Value	\$22,235,563.63	\$773,366.39	\$31,292,905.07	\$8,374,008.89
Percentage of Total Value		3.48%		26.76%
Volume	1,674,903	32,443	2,379,550	501,917
Percentage of Total Volume		1.94%		21.09%

Total Market Share – Holiday Season

	Total Market (December 2007)	Harry Potter (December 2007)	Total Market (December 2008)	Twilight Saga (December 2008)
Value	\$147,161,085.17	\$773,366.39	\$149,311,535.60	\$8,374,008.89
Percentage of Total Value		0.53%		5.61%
Volume	7,653,940	32,443	8,544,153	501,917
Percentage of Total Volume		0.42%		5.87%

Unit Sales Ranks

It's safe to say that with *Twilight*, fans bought the backlist, while Potterites kept up with the series and bought only the newest book. If we look at which books in each series sold, we can get a clearer picture of buying patterns from readers of both series.

The graphs below list each series' respective volume sold per unit, listed from left to right in descending order. For instance, we see that *Twilight*, was the best selling Meyer book in 2007, while *Eclipse*, sold the least.

Twilight – 2008 Sales by Volume

	Twilight - Vol. 1	New Moon - Vol. 2	Breaking Dawn - Vol. 4	Eclipse - Vol. 3
Units	454,558	366,036	293,286	286,516

Harry Potter – 2007 Sales by Volume

	Deathly Hallows - Vol. 7	Half- Blood Prince - Vol. 6	Philosopher's Stone - Vol. 1	Order of the Phoenix - Vol. 5	Goblet of Fire - Vol. 4	Prisoner of Azkaban - Vol. 3	Chamber of Secrets - Vol. 2
Units	394,993	51,410	36,548	34,764	26,687	26,234	12,935

Looking at the *Twilight* series, we see that the volume of books bought corresponds with the number of series. This shows that more new readers were new to the series than were lining up opening night for the latest installment. Harry Potter's fans were already in place, organizing launches and sewing their costumes. If they hadn't caught up to the series, they weren't far behind with *the Half Blood Prince* and *the Order of the Phoenix* placing second.

Also, seeing as *the Order of the Phoenix* sold around the same number of copies as *the Philosopher's Stone* and *the Chamber of Secrets*, it seems the film did little to bolster sales of older titles.

Eclipse v The Deathly Hallows

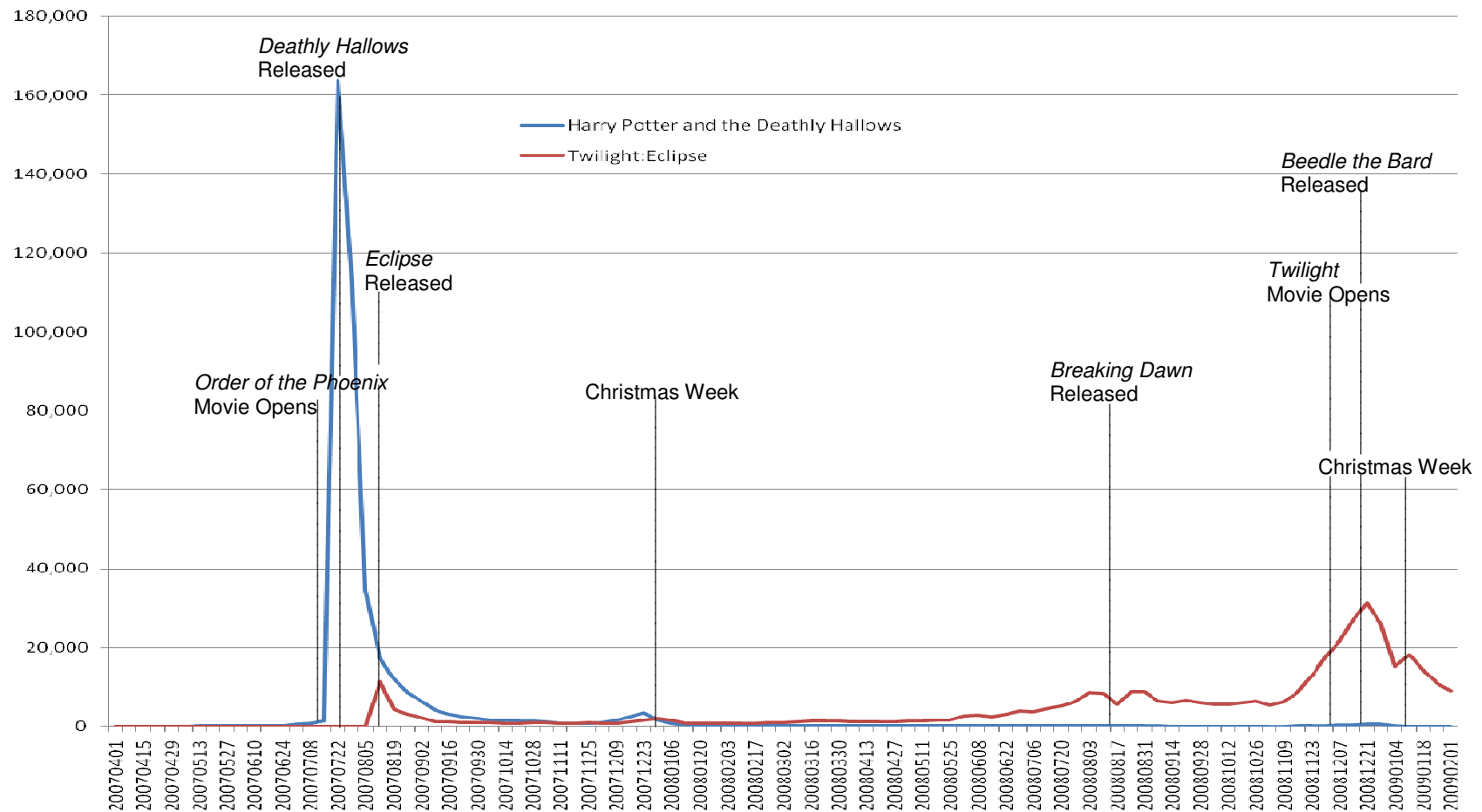
After a look at the total sales for what could be considered for each authors best sales year, we thought a direct comparison of two books launched around the same time over two years would help us better understand the trends.

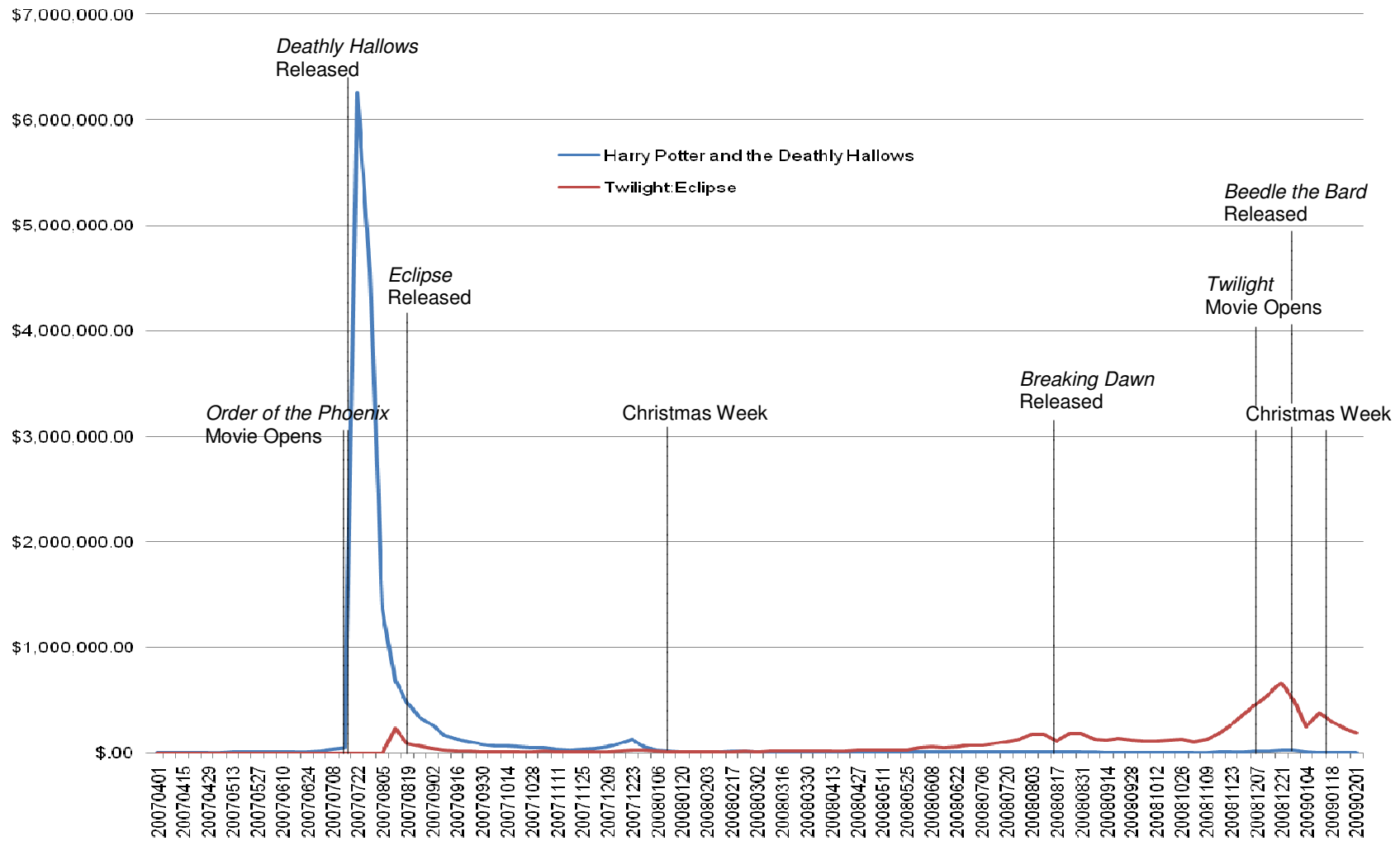
Of note is the pattern that sales took for each of the series after the initial book launch. Holidays overall seem to have had little effect on the Potter series, while the Twilight saga saw sales peaks for three out of its four titles the week of Christmas, 2008. *Eclipse*, the precursor to *Breaking Dawn*, conspicuously hit its peak the week of December 21st selling 31,223 units (\$661,760.63), almost 2 1/2 times its peek launch with 11,244 volumes (\$269,743.56).

Meanwhile, Potter peaks around the week of the initial release, and while holding high sales for only a few months after. It then levels out in the long run, with only slight bumps during the holidays. In its first week out, *Deathly Hallows* sold 163,724 units (\$7,354,236.25) while the Christmas season in 2007 saw a weekly high of 3,597 units (\$159,650.00)

Both books were released around the same time of year. For 2007, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* sold 394,993 units and brought in \$17,838,573.75. *Breaking Dawn* sold 293,286 copies and brought in \$7,296,488.80.

Taking out the first two weeks of sales for each book, the numbers are starkly different. Potter sold 112,662 units valued at \$5,043,267.50. Meyer's tome sold 208,006 units after the first two weeks of *Breaking Dawn*, valued at \$5,250,621.60.

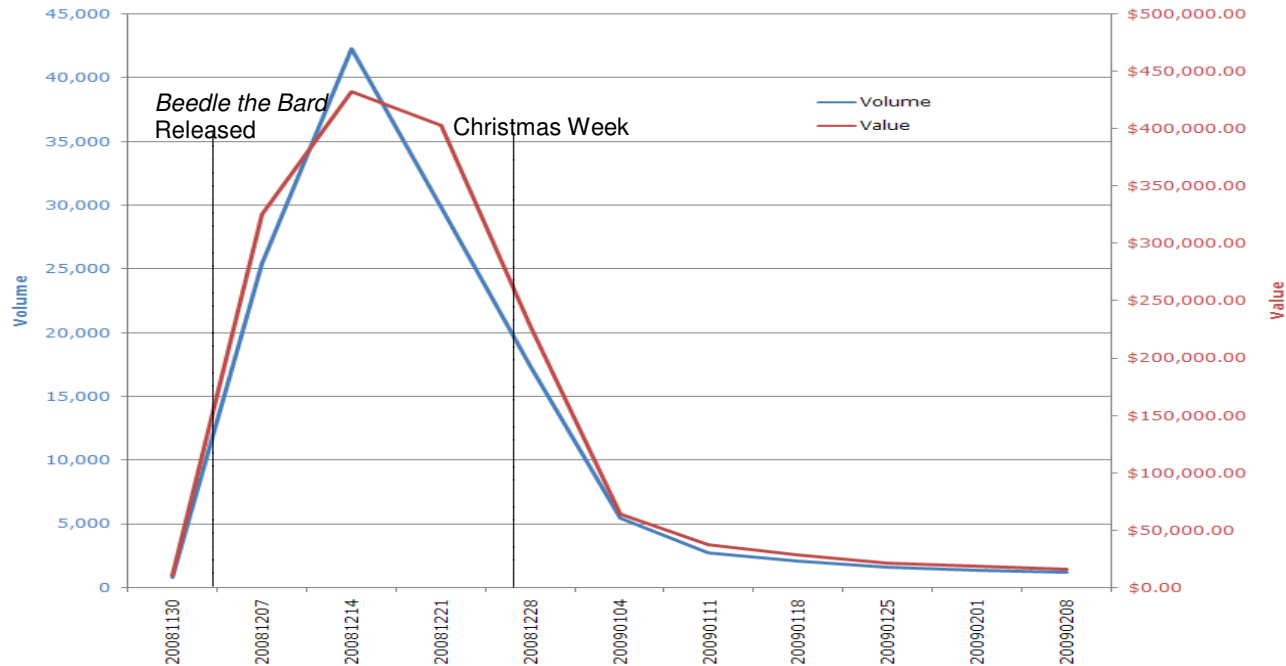
Eclipse v The Deathly Hallows - By Volume

Eclipse v The Deathly Hallows - By Value

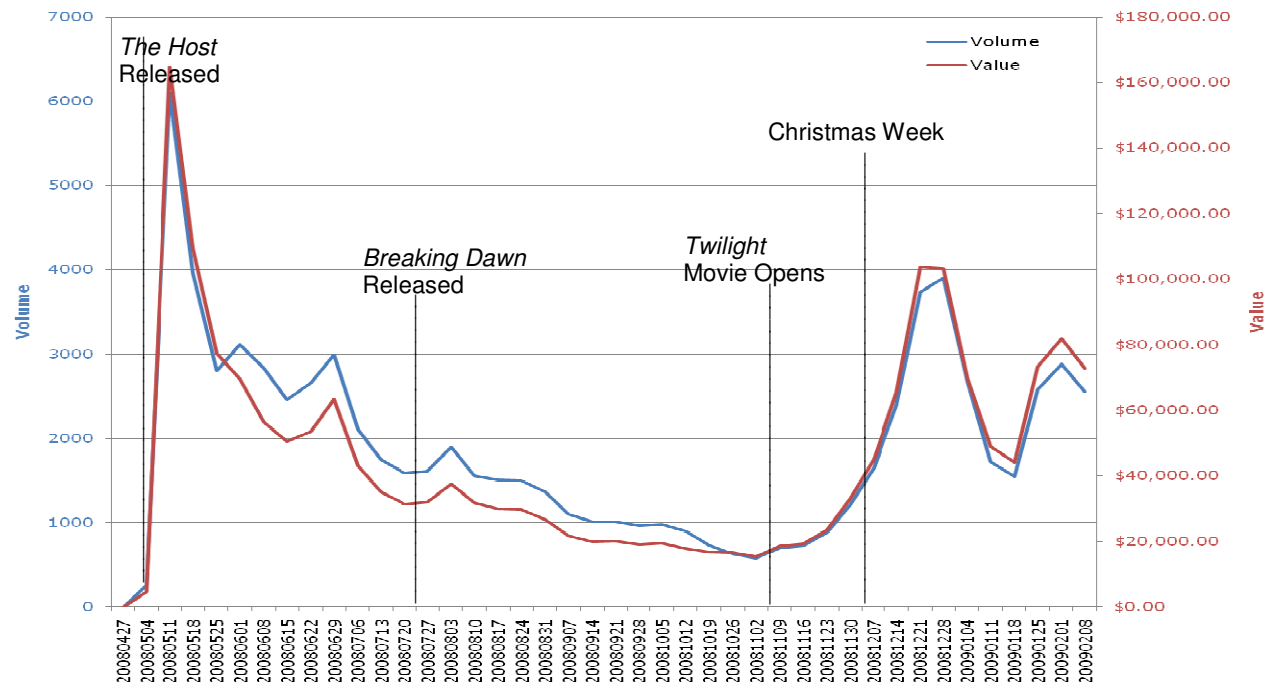
Tales of Beedle the Bard and The Host

J.K. Rowling's *Tales of Beedle the Bard* and Stephenie Meyer's *The Host* were also both released this year to very admirable sales. To note, these two books are extremely different, *Beedle* being a short addendum to the Harry Potter series that is canon to the series, but not necessary for the overall story. *The Host* is an entirely separate story from the Twilight universe and, in fact, marketed to an adult audience.

Volume and Value – *Tales of Beedle the Bard*



Volume and Value – *The Host*



Despite the differences in the two books, interesting correlations can be seen between their relationships to each of their respective series.

- Although Meyer's book has been out since May 2008, sales for both books are similar, *Tales of Beedle the Bard* selling 130,183 units (\$1,584,595.01) and *The Host* selling 79,186 units (\$1,916,972.05).
- Both books have followed the sales patterns of its respective series. *The Tales of Beedle the Bard* sold extremely well within the first few weeks of its release (even replacing *Twilight* as the bestselling book for a couple of weeks during Christmas) and then quickly tapering off. *The Host* experienced good initial sales, then again picked up as the *Twilight* movie was released, continuing to ascend towards Christmas.

Conclusion

So which is the more popular book? Has Meyer's wildfire popularity eclipsed the legacy of Harry Potter?

When all is said and done, the *Twilight* Saga earned more money than Harry Potter. On a large scale, it's not that much more: \$26,306,190.15 to Potter's \$21,538,840.58, a measly .34% difference in Juvenile Fiction market share.

Units wise, it sold more than twice as much— 1,400,396 total units to Potter's 583,571. It was clear that many readers were new to the series and most likely were picking up more than one of the books. With Potter, the readers had been there and, with two years since the last book (which provoked the same sort of first-day buying blitz as *Deathly Hallows*) fans had already read the series and only wanted the new edition.

Twilight managed to maximize on its exposure, releasing the fourth in a series of an already bestselling book and then a film version shortly thereafter. It probably didn't hurt to release the film a few weeks before Christmas, either.

Price may also have played a factor in overall sales. *Twilight* was cheaper than Potter, coming in at around \$11.99 with the older paperbacks—*Twilight* and *New Moon*—and only about \$23.99 each for *Breaking Dawn* and *Eclipse*, both hardcover. The hardcover edition *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* was priced at \$45.00.

But can *Twilight* keep its sales up? Will the next edition in the saga spur backlist sales, or will we see a closer resemblance to Harry Potter, a large sales spike quickly dropping soon after? And will the next edition of the *Twilight* Saga prove as popular as past Potters? On its own, *the Deathly Hallows* sold 394,993 units worth \$17,838,573.75, while *Breaking Dawn* sold 293,286 copies worth \$7,296,488.80.

The long term effects of *Twilight* remain to be seen. Once the initial collect-'em-all frenzy that appears to be driving the sales of Meyer titles is over, will it maintain its popularity? The last four Potters set consecutive records for fastest selling book, the anticipation of another chapter in the larger epic of Harry Potter consistently increasing sales with each addition to the series. Potter has had a core group of diehard fans since the first title in 1997, and managed to sustain and grow its base despite the standard 2 years between volumes.

In reality, these two books are apples and oranges. But it does open the door to an interesting idea: the juvenile fiction phenomena. Wildly popular toys and video games dominate the markets every year—from Cabbage Patch Kids to Nintendo Wii—will we be seeing more of this type of book-craze in the future?
