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WE DON'T NEED ANOTHER HERO: EVALUATING QANTAS' ANNUAL REPORTS AS A HERO'S JOURNEY

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This paper takes the most prominent aspects of what is commonly called 'the hero's journey' (Propp, Campbell, Vogler) – a model of storytelling in which a protagonist acts as the champion of a community in a personal journey to restore harmony – in order to see whether there are significant elements of that to be found in recent Annual Reports of Qantas Airlines.

Design/methodology/approach: The paper adopts a literary perspective in analysing the Chairman's and Chief Executive Officer's reports in the Qantas Annual Reports for years 2008 to 2012 for traces of the hero's journey. Both the style of reporting and the construction of narrative regarding corporate performance are considered.

Findings: The recent Annual Reports of Qantas do present some details of particular challenges to profitability that faced senior management, but they are not indicative of either a hero's journey in action or in depiction. The key reasons for that conclusion relate to the way that senior management is expected to function in such organisations, and to the less dramatic purposes that corporate accounting serve.

Research limitations/implications: The analysis of Qantas Annual Reports is a restricted reading, but it does leave room for future research on other corporations in which the findings may vary.

Originality/value: This paper is a novel assessment of the manner in which senior management reports of corporate performance can be read as responses by that group, or individuals within it, to challenges facing the corporation.

Classification: Research paper

Keywords: Qantas, hero's journey, storytelling, senior management