



Using Social Media for Branding in Publishing

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Abstract

Publishing has experienced an increasing sensitivity for the economic and commercial realities of the business in recent years. By asking the question how social media affect branding and brand management in publishing, this article addresses two subjects that are of great significance for modern publishing. The purpose of our study is to explore whether employing social media for branding in publishing leads to a significant increase in purchasing probability for products associated with social media strategies. The theoretical framework for this research is based on brand management theory and the brand function of risk reduction. T-tests show that social media offerings that can be associated with publishing products do in fact increase the probability of customers purchasing the products - regardless of whether they concentrate on branding the author, the publisher, the character or the series.

Keywords: Branding, social media, purchasing probability, publishing.

Introduction

An increasing sensitivity for the economic and commercial realities of publishing has led to a gradual economisation of the business in the last 20 years (Meyer 2009, p. 159f.). The market for books already is an enormously crowded one, and it will increase to be so as the number of titles published every year increases as well (Thompson 2010, p. 11). This leads to a shortening of books' shelf lives, and shifts the business away from a backlist centred long-termism to a mass-market driven short-termism (Squires 2009, p. 26).

Publishing has experienced an increasing sensitivity for the economic and commercial realities of the business in recent years. In an environment where attention instead of content is scarce, publishers need to look for strategies that make their books more visible in an overcrowded marketplace, and to increase customer loyalty in the face of harsh competition (Thompson 2011). By asking the question how social media affect branding and brand management in publishing, this article addresses two subjects that are of great significance for modern publishing. To be successful, a publishing house needs to effectively manage its own brand as well as that of its authors and its products, and social media seem to be a tool that will increase in importance for marketing and branding in the near future. There are strong arguments for exploring potential opportunities of using social media marketing for branding in publishing (e.g. *ARD/ZDF-Onlinestudien* 2010, *The Nielsen Company* 2009). It shall therefore be investigated how social media offerings provide opportunities to support branding strategies in publishing.

Social media seem to be a tool that will increase in importance for marketing and branding in the near future. In 2010, 69.4% of adults over 14 years in Germany were using the internet (*ARD/ZDF-Onlinestudien* 2010). Facebook currently has more than 500 million active users (Facebook 2011), and although Twitter is not have an established business model yet, this is likely to change soon (Shayon 2010). A 2009 Nielsen Global Online Consumer Survey with over 25,000 subjects from 50 countries has come to the conclusion that 90% of people trust recommendations from people they know, while 70% trust recommendations that are posted



online (The Nielsen Company 2009). These are strong arguments for investigating potential opportunities of using social media marketing for branding in publishing.

Consumers' risk aversion and the brand function of reducing risk serve as a framework for this research. When consumers consider buying a publishing product, they engage in a decision making process that includes both a choice between alternative brands (e.g. two different magazine brands) and a choice between behavioural alternatives (e.g. buying a book or a DVD). They can check three features of a product to determine quality: search qualities, experience qualities, and credence qualities. Publishing products being either experience or credence products, perceived risk when buying them is high (Wirtz 2006). Branding helps to reduce perceived risk and may focus on branding the publisher, the author, a series, or a product/character (Pitsaki 2008).

Theoretical Development

Social Media

In web 1.0, it was the role of the media to publish, while users could only take part passively, without opportunities to comment or give a response. Web 2.0 enables users to both read and write to express their views, thoughts, and opinions. The term refers to the new way of using the World Wide Web as a “platform whereby content and applications are no longer created and published by individuals, but instead are continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion.” (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010, p. 61)

Jeff Jarvis' provocative slogan “Give the people control and we will use it” (2009, p. 11) seems to become a statement rather than a demand. In fact, people increasingly make use of social media tools. Numbers published by Experian Hitwise in June 2010 show that during May, social networks have for the first time in the UK been more popular than search engines (Experian Hitwise 2010). While social networks accounted for 11.88% of UK internet visits, search engines accounted for only 11.33%. Facebook accounted for 55% visits of all UK social networking sites (Experian Hitwise 2010). The comScore “Europe Digital Year in Review” report (comScore 2011) comes to the conclusion that on no other website do Europeans spend more time than on Facebook – 12%, which for the first time is more than on Google sites. On average, 84% of Europeans use social networks, and in Germany, the only

two websites that have more unique visitors than Facebook are Google and Microsoft sites (comScore 2011) .

Kaplan & Haenlein (2010, p. 61f.) have developed a classification scheme for social media.

		Social presence/ Media richness		
		Low	Medium	High
Self- presentation/ Self- disclosure	High	Blogs	Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook)	Virtual social networks (e.g. Second Life)
	Low	Collaborative projects (e.g. Wikipedia)	Content communities (e.g. YouTube)	Virtual Game worlds (e.g. World of Warcraft)

Figure 0-1: Classification of social media

Source: Kaplan & Haenlein (2010, p. 62)

The dimension social presence/ media richness stems from media research. Social presence refers to the intimacy and immediacy of a medium, where higher social presence implies a larger influence communication partners have on each other's behaviour, while media richness means the amount of information transmitted in a given time period (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010, p. 61). The second dimension is that of self-presentation/ self-disclosure, which are social processes. Self-presentation refers to people's desire to present themselves and control other's impressions of them, while self-disclosure is "the conscious or unconscious revelation of personal information" (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010, p. 62).

This research focuses on social media that score high on the self-presentation/ self-disclosure dimension, i.e. blogs, social networking sites, and virtual social networks. However, the latter are excluded because using, for instance, Second Life for marketing purposes is very specific and would go beyond the scope of this article, while blogs and social networks are more similar. They are both based on text as the primary transmitter of information, which is why media richness for blogs in particular is low. It is higher for social networks, because these include more images, sound, and video.

It shall therefore now be investigated how such social media offerings provide opportunities to support branding strategies in publishing.

Publishing Product Purchase Decision

When consumers consider buying a publishing product, they engage in a decision making process that includes both a choice between alternative brands (e.g. two different magazine brands) and a choice between behavioural alternatives (e.g. buying a book or a DVD) (Peter & Olson 2008, p. 162). The consumer decision making process is a “goal-directed, problem-solving process” (Peter & Olson 2008, p. 165) during which consumers can check three features of a product to determine quality: search qualities, experience qualities, and credence qualities.

Search qualities can at least partially be assessed before purchasing, experience qualities can only be assessed after the product has been used, and credence qualities cannot be assessed, even after the product has been used (Wirtz 2006, p. 31f.).

For instance, when buying clothing, quality can be assessed before purchasing because products can be tried on, and clothes are therefore search products. A restaurant would be an experience product, because it is impossible to know whether the food is good before having tried it, but one does know afterwards. A credence product then is, for instance, a doctor’s diagnosis, because patients do not know whether it is actually correct but have to believe in the doctor’s competence.

Publishing products can be either experience or credence products, which exposes consumers to relatively high risk before purchasing them. With a book or a magazine, quality can only be assessed after reading. They are therefore experience goods, which makes it risky to decide to spend money on them. Some media products are credence products, which makes it even riskier to buy them. For instance, some content in newspapers is impossible to judge; even after having read a particular article or feature, the reader does not know if the content is true or correct.



Since they cannot judge before they decide to buy, consumers perceive relatively high risk during the decision making and the buying process. Hence, a strategy is needed that reduces that risk for the consumer. Dedicated branding is a strategy worth considering when marketing publishing products.

Branding in Book Publishing

The American Marketing Association (2010) defines a brand as “[a] name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller’s good or service as distinct from those of other sellers”. Branding, therefore, means “endowing products and services with the power of a brand” (Kotler & Keller 2007, p. 136). Thus, companies try to distinguish their products or services from those of other companies.

In the 1990s, publishing houses first began to seriously consider managing media products as brands (Habann et al. 2008, p. 25). Later, they expanded their brands to the internet, thereby applying economies of scope by using both the brand and the content, modified for the new environment (Nienstedt & Seelmann 2009, p. 1).

Independent from the ultimate choice of branding strategy and target, brands – not only publishing brands – have several functions (all points mentioned adapted from Kotler et al. 2009, p. 428f. unless specifically referenced otherwise):

For consumers	For companies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Signalling: Brands signal quality and security, and ensure expected satisfaction with the product• Reducing risk: Brands reduce the perceived risk for customers, which is particularly important on the internet (Rubinstein & Griffiths 2001, p. 397)• Facilitating purchase: Buyers can easily choose the same service or product again if they were satisfied	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Customer loyalty• Higher willingness to pay• Securing competitive advantage• Competitive protection• Legal protection• Protection from copying• Increasing marketing communication efficiencies• Attracting higher-quality employees• Stronger support from supply chain

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simplifying choice (Rubinstein & Griffiths 2001, p. 396)	<p>partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Growth opportunities (brand extensions)• Customer and market segmentation
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Figure 0-2: The role of brands

This article shall focus on the advantages brands have for consumers. The brand functions of reducing risk are particularly important for publishing products: Being either experience or credence products, perceived risk when buying publishing products is high. Branding helps to reduce perceived risk. If consumers trust a newspaper or magazine brand, they are more likely to buy it although they cannot generally judge quality before buying. The same holds true for books: Branding in the sense of a book being produced by a prestigious publishing house leads to a minimisation of the reader’s sensation of risk (Pitsaki 2010, p. 92). If a reader trusts a branded author or publishing house, she is more likely to buy the book. Thereby, the publisher brand serves as a quality guarantee for the books it publishes (Pitsaki 2008, p. 106).

This paper focuses on the opportunities that employing social media marketing strategies offers for branding in publishing. Social media strategies are arguably particularly easy to use for publishers, as opposed to companies from other industries, because their customers can be assumed to have an affinity for media in general and the written word in particular anyway. Especially when budgets are tight or when individual products cannot be promoted sufficiently because they are not expected to earn back high marketing spendings, social media as a tool that is relatively cheap in comparison with advertising on established broadcast media are a viable and commercially sensible alternative.

H1: Due to reduced perceived risk, purchasing probability for publishing products that are associated with social media as opposed to products that are not is significantly higher.

There are various approaches to branding in publishing. This section shall introduce the four most common strategies (cf., for instance, Pitsaki 2008 or Meyer 2009, p. 160):

1. Publisher branding

The central idea behind publisher branding is that the brand, which functions as a representative of the company, engenders value and meaning for the company’s

products (Pitsaki 2008, p. 106) on all markets the company operates on. While advertising markets are highly important for every magazine publisher, they are less so, if at all, for book publishers. However, all companies in the media industries have to keep in mind that their brand is not only relevant for consumers: A publisher's brand is also, if not even more, relevant on the market for content, where reputation prompts better competition (Pitsaki 2010, p. 91). In today's multimedia environment, publishers do not only compete with other publishers, but with providers of any kind of content. This can be in print or digital, and does not have to be in text format: audiobooks, films, the internet, etc. all compete for the recipients' attention. Therefore, possessing symbolic capital in the form of a publisher brand is a strategic asset that attracts attention for books despite harsh competition from other media (Thompson 2010, p. 8).

H1a: Purchasing probability for publishing products that are associated with social media strategies that brand the publisher is significantly higher than for products without an author brand.

2. Author branding

An author brand distinguishes a book by a publisher from those of competitors or even from other books by other authors but from the same publisher, the distinguishing feature being the person of the author. To successfully create an author brand, the writer must be able to elicit emotional attachment in her readers first, then evoke a perception of high quality, and finally offer a USP to the reader – for instance, the author's voice as a unique feature (Meyers 2011).

Hesmondhalgh (2007, p. 23f.) has developed a model of how companies in the cultural industries can reduce customers' perceived risk, which can be applied to branding strategies in publishing. Hesmondhalgh's approach, which is called "Formatting", includes formatting strategy by star, by genre and by serial. Formatting by star, which is applicable for author branding, means breaking a writer as a new star by marketing efforts, thereby attempting to create a bestseller. Branded authors have numerous advantages in a system that is preoccupied with "big books" – potential best sellers – (Thompson 2010, p. 187ff.), because they already have the necessary symbolic capital (Thompson 2010, p. 9).



H1b: Purchasing probability for publishing products that are associated with social media strategies that brand the author is significantly higher than for products without an author brand.

3. Series branding

Series can also be managed as brands. For this article, a series shall be defined as a “set of books with shared characteristics” (Pitsaki 2008, p. 106). As Pitsaki highlights, the restrictions imposed on a series cannot be generalised. They might be the subject, the genre, the degree of quality, characteristics of the author, etc. For series branding, Hesmondhalgh’s formatting by serial applies (2007, p. 24). It is particularly appropriate where author and genre are less important, but it is not necessary to singularly pursue a series branding approach: Strategies of author or publisher branding might still be used in combination with the branded series.

H1c: Purchasing probability for publishing products that are associated with social media strategies that brand the series is significantly higher than for products without an author brand.

4. Product/Character branding

This publishing branding strategy focuses on the content, and is often based on converting a story’s characters into stars (Pitsaki 2008, p. 112). Examples are Harry Potter, Don Quixote, The Little Prince, or Edward and Bella. With reference to Hesmondhalgh’s formatting model, product brands in publishing can mean formatting by genre (2007, p. 23), where the genre, instead of a single character, operates as a label, for instance, “teen vampire novels”. However, both characters and the plot can become brands as well, which are then more important than the author. What is striking about them is that many of those product brands were not made brands, but evolved into branded products because target groups recognised their unique emotional value and continuously high demand turned those products into steady or long sellers. These products often start as stand-alone products, for which sub-brands or brand extensions are developed once they have been popular for a longer period of time (Meyer 2009, p. 164).

H1d: Purchasing probability for publishing products that are associated with social media strategies that brand the product/character is significantly higher than for products without an author brand.



Social media for Branding in Publishing

Branding and social media are two concepts that complement each other: Before engaging in social media, a publishing house needs to define what they want to stand for, and what they want to communicate. Branding efforts need to be completed before social media strategies can be employed; otherwise, communication will be inconsistent and unconvincing. There is an increased necessity to develop very strong brand foundations in the first place, since successful internet branding “necessitates relaxing the degree of control exerted over the brand” (de Chernatony 2001, p. 194) and customers take the brand that was created and develop their own meanings (Rubinstein & Griffiths 2001, p. 404). Hence, the loss of control caused by social media should consequently lead to stronger brands because in order to not lose their defining characteristics when in touch with user generated content, brands need an invincible foundation.

Also, in today’s differentiated and fragmented world, to position yourself in web 2.0 becomes increasingly important to create a brand identity and be present in consumers’ relevant set of potential purchase options. Social media are therefore one factor that contributes to brand building and brand management. However, delivering a consistent brand experience is crucial for both online and offline strategies (Rubinstein & Griffiths 2001, p. 401), which demands a high level of consistency between both approaches.

Moreover, the new possibilities for two-way communication and real conversation instead of advertising in broadcast style help to open up new segments and exploit market opportunities: Firstly, social media help to market unique and authentic products in an unobtrusive way consumers do not at once identify as advertising. Secondly, social media help build a brand personality and make the brand more approachable for customers (Rubinstein & Griffiths 2001, p. 401). This adds to reducing customers’ perceived risk when buying the product because they can engage with it prior to the actual purchase decision. For instance, an author gets more approachable if he runs a blog, or a character sparks more interest if there is an accompanying page on Facebook.



Making use of two-way communication also means that feedback channels can be used more easily and in an uncomplicated manner. This is important because creating an experience for customers implies asking them for feedback. Making use of customer feedback increases customer involvement and builds customer loyalty (Rubinstein & Griffiths 2001, p. 403). Also, actively using feedback and information provided by customers enables publishers to identify their best customers and actively engage with them. While customers increasingly seize control and communication becomes more customer oriented and initiated, it is important for publishers to have an effective customer relationship management to enable both understanding and influencing of customers.

It can hence be argued that publishing products with a marketing strategy relying on social media have a higher probability to be purchased than publishing products with no such strategy. Firstly, as stated above, people trust recommendations from people they know, and recommendations that are posted online (The Nielsen Company 2009). Secondly, social media offerings around a product may reduce perceived risk for the potential consumer because they offer the opportunity to engage with the content prior to purchasing it and thereby getting a first impression as to whether the product will meet expectations.

The hypothesis that shall be investigated in the empirical research below is that purchasing probability for publishing products that are associated with social media as opposed to products that are not is significantly higher.

Since there has not been much research published on this particular topic, the approach is exploratory in nature. The intention therefore is to create a piece of real-world research (Robson 2002, p. 4).

H1	<i>Purchasing probability for publishing products that are associated with social media as opposed to products that are not is significantly higher.</i>
H1a	<i>Purchasing probability for publishing products that are associated with social media strategies that brand the publisher is significantly higher than for products without an author brand.</i>
H1b	<i>Purchasing probability for publishing products that are associated with social media strategies that brand the author is significantly higher than for products</i>

	<i>without an author brand.</i>
H1c	<i>Purchasing probability for publishing products that are associated with social media strategies that brand the series is significantly higher than for products without an author brand.</i>
H1d	<i>Purchasing probability for publishing products that are associated with social media strategies that brand the product/character is significantly higher than for products without an author brand.</i>

Table 1: Overview of hypotheses

Methodology

To answer the research questions, a survey was designed for potential end consumers of publishing products that could be accessed online from 5 July to 23 August 2010, for 7 weeks in total. The survey was available in English and German language. Altogether, 451 people were reached. To ensure comparability of all answers, only the 125 correctly completed questionnaires were used for data analysis.

Sample Demographics

It was not the aim to find a sample that was representative of the whole population but rather a group that shows a high affinity for both books and social media. It was assumed that students would fit this profile sufficiently well, which influenced the ways that were chosen to contact potential respondents:

- Invitation emails were sent out to university students in Germany, the UK, and the US;
- The link to the survey was posted in groups for publishing, book science and branding on social networking sites Facebook and studiVZ;
- The link to the survey was posted on branding and social media blogs;
- Viral effects, i.e. participants or friends passing on the link, were encouraged.

Hence, of the 125 participants whose answers were included in the analysis, 99 were university students and one was a high school student. 65% of respondents were 24 years and under, 24% were 25 to 29 years old, and only 10% were 30 years and older. 77% of respondents were female, 33% were male. 50% of them spend up to 2 hours online every day,

while 46% spend 2 to 4 hours online. Almost 25% claim that 70% and more of their time online is spent with social media, while almost 48% spend between 70% and 30% of their time online with social media, and only 28% allocate 30% and less of their time online to social media. 98% access the internet with a computer at home, 27% with a computer at work, and 16% and 15% use a computer on the go or a smartphone, respectively. Geographically, respondents were widely dispersed. Of the respondents whose surveys were eventually used for the analysis, 75% accessed the survey from Germany, and 10% accessed it from the UK and the US each.

Questionnaire

Apart from the questions about demographics, online and book buying behaviour, the survey contained ice-breaker questions before the actual research questions were stated.

These ice-breaker questions were supposed to help respondents get used to the research situation, but at the same time contained useful information. Participants were asked which social media tools they used regularly; multiple answers were possible.

Blogs are used by 40% of all respondents, and even 67% of respondents from the US and the UK. Microblogging, such as Twitter, is used by 18% of all respondents, and even 38% of respondents from the US and the UK. Taking into account that more respondents from the US and the UK than from the complete sample use blogs, this is in line with the figures according to which only 14% of the general population use Twitter, but 73% of bloggers do (Sussman 2009).

Social networks like Facebook are used by almost all respondents (97% in total, 100% US and UK). Video hosting, such as YouTube, is used by 74% of respondents, while image hosting, such as Flickr, is used by only 7% of all respondents, but 25% of respondents from the US and the UK.

An open question that concluded the introductory part of the survey was concerned with respondents' attitude towards social media: it asked them to name any three properties they associated with social media. The answers were grouped and similar features were summarised into one, so that 42 individual features remained at the end.



The most important item, with 75% of all respondents naming it, was that social media help to keep in touch with friends and family. With 42% of respondents naming it, entertainment was the second most important item, followed by information (20%), convenience (17%) and data protection concerns (16%). It was striking that only 1% of respondents associates social media with reading book reviews, and also that only 1% associates marketing with social media. This shows that social media are on the one hand ideal for companies to start open dialogue, because users do not yet connect social media with advertising and marketing, but on the other hand, this might mean that users perceive social media as a very private sphere and reactions to marketing might be very negative.

In the second part of the survey, the actual research questions were asked. Participants read a scenario description before answering the questions. They were asked to imagine, for the following eight questions, that they were in a bookshop and wanted to buy a novel that was entertaining and easy to read. After having read the blurbs and the first page of some books, all of the books seemed to appeal equally. However, none of them had been heard of; neither reviews nor ads had been seen before.

Participants were then presented with eight purchase decision scenarios. Two of them centred on the author, two around the publisher, two around the characters, and two around a series the book might belong to. Of these pairs, one suggested that the author/publisher/character/series had been encountered before by the potential buyer via social media, and one suggested that the author/publisher/character/series was completely unknown.

Measurement were adapted from previous research and carried out by a five-point Likert scale, ranging from very unlikely (1) to very likely (5).

Data Collection

For data analysis, t-tests were conducted to compare purchasing behaviour for publishing products that are associated with social media as opposed to products that are not.

The question arising is whether there is a difference in purchasing behaviour for products that have social media strategies, and products that do not. Also, it needs to be tested whether that

difference is statistically significant. A t-test was chosen as statistical method to analyse the data. For the data in this study a “paired sample t-test” was the appropriate statistical test method because there are two samples (the products with and products without social media), but the subjects are matched subjects (in this case, with themselves) by comparing the purchase decisions of the same group of people for two different scenarios (Statistics Solution 2009). The t-test in this study was used to find out whether there was a difference in μ_{SM} and $\mu_{N/A}$, the means for products with and products without social media, respectively.

Hence, statistical hypotheses can be formulated as

$$H_0: \mu_{SM} = \mu_{N/A} \text{ or } \mu_D = 0$$

the means are the same, or the difference between them is 0

$$H_1: \mu_{SM} \neq \mu_{N/A} \text{ or } \mu_D \neq 0$$

the means are not the same, or the difference between them is not 0

The desired outcome of testing is that H_0 can be rejected. H_0 can be rejected if the t-test is significant at the 0.05 level.

To calculate whether there is a statistically significant difference in purchasing behaviour for authors whose marketing strategy includes a social media strategy and authors for whom this is not the case, the means of the purchase probability were calculated in a first step. Respondents' answers ranged from “very likely” (rating: 5) to “very unlikely” (rating: 1). The average purchase probability across the whole group could then be calculated for authors with and authors without social media strategy.

According to the research hypothesis, it could be expected that potential customers are more likely to buy the product with a dedicated social media marketing strategy and that the difference to the product without social media marketing strategy will be statistically significant.

Results

Table 2 and Table 3 show the results of four paired sample t-tests for authors with and without social media, publishers with and without social media, characters with and without social media, and series with and without social media.

Table 2 shows the means for all pairs. Clearly, the means for products with social media are higher for authors, publishers, characters, and series.

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	with social media	3.8640	125	.63935	.05719
Author	without social media	2.5280	125	.93822	.08392
Pair 2	with social media	3.7200	125	.69096	.06180
Series	without social media	2.5360	125	.77817	.06960
Pair 3	with social media	3.1360	125	.88303	.07898
Character	without social media	2.1440	125	.71509	.06396
Pair 4	with social media	3.3065	124	.78789	.07075
Publisher	without social media	2.4355	124	.79880	.07173

Table 2: Means for all pairs

Table 3 shows that all t-tests are significant at the 0.01 level. Hence, the differences in means are statistically significant.

	Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Author	1.33600	1.16359	.10407	1.13001	1.54199	12.837	124	.000*
Pair 2 Series	1.18400	1.00309	.08972	1.00642	1.36158	13.197	124	.000*
Pair 3 Character	.99200	1.11801	.10000	.79408	1.18992	9.920	124	.000*
Pair 4 Publisher	.87097	1.16149	.10431	.66450	1.07743	8.350	123	.000*

Table 3: Paired Sample t-tests

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

This means that respondents were more likely to buy products they had previously learned about in blogs, in social networks, or via other forms of social media. Customers, therefore,



do perceive social media activities and are more likely to buy publishing products with a social media strategy behind them.

Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 1c and 1d can thus be accepted. Consequently, H1 can be accepted as well. The t-test have hence shown that publishing products that can be associated with social media offerings, regardless of whether they concentrate on branding the author, the publisher, the character or the series, increase the probability of customers purchasing the products.

Discussion

This article attempted to meet the challenge of combining two extensive topics, both equally important for modern publishing: branding and social media. It has been shown how branding and social media can function as a virtuous cycle. It has also been shown how branding strategies can be used in the publishing context, and how author, publisher, product or series branding strategies contribute to general strategic brand management.

While section 0 has already given an insight into how branding strategies and social media opportunities complement each other in theory, the survey findings have confirmed the hypothesis that publishing products that can be associated with social media offerings have an increased probability of customers purchasing the products. Hence, making use of social media for branding and brand management in publishing is viable from both a theoretical perspective and from a practical point of view since it helps publishers pursue branding strategies that both support their commercial goals and at the same time are successful with and adopted by consumers.

This research can confidently state that social media strategies behind publishing products increase purchase probability. However, it has not been specifically investigated why consumers prefer the products with a social media strategy. Our hypothesis that this is due to a decrease in perceived risk would have to be tested in more in-depth research. Positivist research projects assume that a sample that is sufficiently large is a good representation of the population (Knight 2002, p. 44). In this study, all statistical analyses have been conducted with a sample of 125 respondents, which is representative, but it would be desirable to replicate the study with more respondents. Also, it would be interesting what the results for a more general sample would be that does not focus on students.



Another problem is that subjects do not normally make decisions in artificial and experimental situations (Knight 2002, p. 44). In this study, the data obtained from the evaluation of the survey were processed with care and diligence, but the participants may have given answers that do not really reflect their attitude (because of a lack of motivation towards the end of the survey, because of inferences about social desirability, etc.). It might therefore be helpful to replicate the study with an experimental research design instead of a survey design.

Although this study gives a good, reliable insight into results for a representative student sample, more surveys of the kind conducted in this study are needed to obtain reliable results for a more general sample. It would also be necessary to repeat the study over time, to eliminate factors of temporary fashion and short-term zeitgeist effects.



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