

BOOK BRANDING AND PROMOTING AUTHORIAL IDENTITY: A COMPARATIVE APPROACH

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Marketing books discuss personality branding, institutional branding, corporate branding, product branding, or touristic branding, but books are excluded from the discussion on product brands, even though we witness a growing interest in books and writers as cultural products. More than that, we may say that the book is a commodity in the context of the consumer revolution and “the commoditization of knowledge”, to use Roberta Sassatelli’s phrase [31]. If nations, towns, universities, business schools, celebrities, even TV programmes are brands, then books could be considered as brands, too. We could even say that books are commodified brands and the branding process must involve efficient branding strategies, so authors construct a brand as a marker of their identity in the postmodern commodified world.

The paper looks at some current strategies for book and authorial branding, which were theoretically launched by American authors, and the ways in which they are practised by English and Romanian authors. Firstly, we provide the aims and scope of the study and the conceptual framework assisting us in the discussion of current trends in book branding, and we also expound the trajectory from classical brand types to books as brands. Secondly, we present the major features of the book branding process and illustrate some book and authorial branding strategies and the extent of their usage in England and Romania, such as self-publishing, the digitalization of the writer, the commodification of arts or the pact between art and business, which instantiates this phenomenon. The results of the comparative exploration of these branding strategies disclose the various differences between Romanian and English literary production, management and marketing practices that enable books and their authors to respond to the new cultural and commercial demands.

The investigation takes its cue from aspects concerning literary production, modern publishing and print culture, marketing discourse and practices, cultural production, and cultural studies in general.

Key words: book, cultural marketing, book branding, branding strategies, authorial identity, self-publishing

INTRODUCTION

Aims and scope

The interdisciplinary character of this study results from combining research methods specific to cultural analysis (with a special focus on the world of literature, literary production and the recognition of cultural values) with aspects related to economic phenomena (production, product marketing and advertising).

By pointing out the current status of global trends in building branded authors and branded books, the study encourages Romanian authors to intensify involvement in, and adaptation to, the requirements within the world of literary production and consumption. The article does not claim to offer an all-encompassing analysis of such events and practices in Romanian and English cultures, since examples could be too far ranging and complex, just as the socio-cultural backgrounds of these phenomena are.

However, the paper intends to show that the new branding strategies contribute to raising public visibility for authors, and it aims to raise writers' awareness of the new cultural and economic trends which affect postmodern literacy. The article points out that despite globalizing trends in promoting authorial identity, branding ultimately ensures the production of particularization and uniqueness, since branding removes any idea of the generic. Improving brand design, brand communication and product placement can boost the success of Romanian writers both on internal and international

markets. Even though some may perceive the growing commercialization of arts as a distortion of the traditional codes of values, the new forms of artistic production and communication reveal new practices in the changing times, facilitate faster communication and distribution, and greater visibility in diverse cultural media. Complying with the rules of branding has, after all, its own risks, and the blending of aesthetic and commercial values will certainly prove their possible (in)efficiency, (non-)endurance, and (non-)productivity in time.

By pointing out the latest challenges within the world of literary production and consumption, the investigation is thus useful for Romanian writers who want to synchronize their practices with those of the global market in general, and for anyone interested in branding, cultural marketing and literary production, media representation, advertising and promoting culture, or in the area of book publishing.

Unfortunately, few similarities can be found between English or American book branding strategies and Romanian trends. As a result, the comparative method of investigation may seem fragmented or partial, so this constitutes yet another signal that the Romanian cultural market needs to adjust its ideas and practices to Western or global ones.

Conceptual framework

Perhaps the most striking aspect in the title of this paper refers to the conjunction of the terms *book* and *branding*. Generally, these terms are not found together in specialized

literature, whether we refer to book production or marketing discourse. However, I will try to show the ways in which these terms can be used to refer to a new cultural phenomenon which views books as marketable and success-ensuring products.

British government advisor Simon Anholt defines a brand as a product, a service, or an organization regarded in conjunction with its name, identity, and reputation, while branding is the process of creation, planning and communication of the name and identity with the aim of building and managing reputation [4]. Formulated by a renowned specialist in the field of nation branding, Anholt's definition is well-worth mentioning. Additionally, most marketing books discuss personality branding, institutional branding, corporate branding, product branding, or touristic branding. Nevertheless, books themselves are excluded from the discussion on product brands, even though we witness a growing interest in books and writers as cultural products. More than that, we can say that the book has become a commodity in the context of the consumer revolution and utilitarian culture.

However, the connection between the two terms has also been prompted by Morris B. Holbrook and Elizabeth Hirschman's study [18] in which a clear relation between marketing practices and cultural products is established. Holbrook and Hirschman's investigations of the semiotics of consumption prove to be very useful for understanding the broader concept of *cultural marketing* which basically integrates consumer behaviour within the dimensions of culture. The

authors point out the importance of social meanings at the basis of consumption patterns, while these social meanings inevitably guide marketing practices. Therefore, the relation between marketing practices and the socio-cultural context or cultural products opens an insightful perspective for analysing the complex phenomena of cultural production, marketing, and consumption.

Their three-segmental model [18, 57] takes into account the interconnectedness of social meanings of signs, marketing practices, and cultural products. The three perspectives are interrelated, so the authors reveal that by studying the semiology of marketing signs, we can better interpret cultural products; by better interpreting cultural products, we can better see the social meanings that customers attach to their patterns of consumption; and, by better understanding these social meanings, we can better devise marketing practices so as to improve the efficiency of the marketing mix (product, price, place, and promotion).

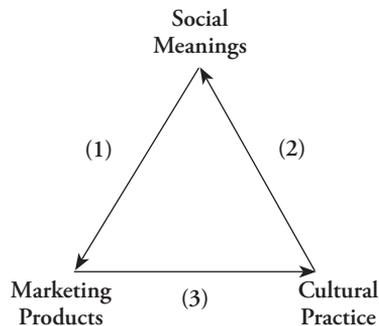


Fig. 1. The relationship between marketing and its social/cultural context [18, 57]

However, the second and third perspectives are most relevant for this kind of investigation since they encourage the interpretive semiology of cultural products (from popular art or high culture) so as to reach the meanings that underlie the aspects of consumption, or the semiological analysis of consumption symbolism and marketing imagery so as to grasp the meanings of various works of art. For instance, the third perspective is particularly innovative because it shows how marketing signs inform our interpretation of arts, entertainment, and other cultural products. Hence, by undertaking such an exploration, the researcher closely connects marketing and art so that both come to assume broader meanings and roles than those usually assigned to them.

FROM BRAND TYPOLOGY TO BRANDING LITERARY PRODUCTION

In order to understand the ways in which marketing processes assist the world of literary production, a brief presentation of brand types seems useful. In specialized literature, the common brand typology includes the following types of brands:

- a) product brands and corporate/commercial brands: a brand which represents a corporation/an organization and reflects its patrimony, values, people, or strategy (according to D.A. Aaker [2]);
- b) institutional brands specific to various types of organizations: media institutions, social, political, religious, cultural, banking/financial, educational institutions;

- c) Olivier Zara [36] investigates personal brands which deal with the management of the identity and professional reputation in case of persons;
- d) touristic brands refer to local trademarks and community brands (brand-city/city brands; brands, for touristic resorts, etc.), regional brands and national brands. Simon Anholt's model for building competitive identity should be a signpost for every nation, starting from the idea that places must manage their national/internal identity and external reputation/image efficiently and competitively [4].

The concept of identity reminds us that, even if at its origin a brand is nothing but a name, in time it acquires autonomy and its own meaning. Hence, according to K. L. Keller, a brand's identity reflects the contribution of all its constitutive elements to its fame and reputation [21]. In Marie-Claude Sicard's view [33], by means of its name, logo, products, value, and the manner in which it is presented to the public/consumers, the brand creates an identity for itself, which enables it to be known and then recognized. It is Wally Ollins's belief that identity (especially corporate or organizational identity) does not represent only the explicit management of all the ways in which the organization presents itself to its public by means of perceptions and experiences, but it is also an instrument of change management which has, as the main modes of expression, the substance (the product or service offered), communication, setting, and behaviour [24].

The formation and projection of an adequate image is achieved by using efficient methods, techniques and strategies of marketing communication, applied to specific types of brands. But the new production and marketing strategies certainly show that books have become brand-buys. Particularly in the Western world, there are various original strategies to build and promote authorial and product identity. Creating the identity of the brand, communicating, positioning and differentiating it on the market have become valid stages in case of books, too. Aspects, stages, and procedures specific to commercial activities have been adapted to, and adopted by, the world of letters and literacy. Books turn into marketable products, so they – and their authors – must comply with the rules of the market.

Romanian branding specialist Cristian Cărămidă has made a significant contribution to the field, and he wrote the first Romanian studies on brands and branding. He agrees that names constitute integral elements of a brand's verbal identity [7], together with other primary components defining the visual identity of a brand, analysed by L. M. Conway [9] or A. Wheeler [35], which aims at perceptive responses and encourages associations of the type logo/logotype (the graphical representation of brand name and identity), slogan (representing the culture of a brand), visual style, colours and characters. In case of books, readers' interest is set off by means of a lively and evocative interaction of components such as cover (front, back) material and design, title, character font type and size, colours (for text and images), text

and image layout, blurb contents, author's photo, or reviews and references included as credentials. AbeBooks.co.uk¹ hosts a collection of "Beautiful Books", their beauty being obviously evoked by their recognized literary value, but this is also reactivated for the modern reader by means of their cover design created by David Pearson.

A. Ivanovic and P. H. Collin believe that, in marketing terms, positioning is the practice of placing a brand in a certain position on the market in order to be recognized by the consumer/public [19], or it can be defined as the technique used for the purpose of creating an image or an identity in the mind of the target-group to which the product or the brand is addressed. Brand positioning resides upon applying differentiation strategies. Among image differentiators used in marketing research for brand positioning, we can find pride, trust, ambition, and notoriety (*Biz* magazine, *Top 50 Romanian strong brands*, September 2010). As for product brand, it must have sufficient visibility and credibility from the point of view of its performance in order to be considered by the consumer.

Al Ries and Laura Ries make it clear that, nowadays, almost anything can become a brand, a successful one since "any proper noun is a brand. You are a brand. And if you want to be truly successful in life, you should consider yourself a brand and follow the laws of branding outlined in this book" [28, xii]. We might understand that

¹ Access through Internet: <<http://www.abebooks.co.uk/>> [accessed 20 May 2011].

if someone is not a brand and does not strive to become one, then that person cannot be successful in life. At the same time, the codes of the commodified world involve that, as long as you produce something, a good of any kind which is intended to a public, you must inevitably accept to brand yourself and/or your product. Hence, one must develop strategies to build and maintain a brand in the mind of the prospective client. For instance, some of the strategies for product branding include a marketing programme, advertising, fancy packaging, sales promotions, web design, public relations, etc. Why not considering these strategies for book branding? Most people involved in business dream of creating their own brand some day, which should guarantee a good market position and recognition, a great number of customers, and a satisfying profit. The identity of those businessmen is also given, even though partly, by their brand.

Similarly, in the contemporary world of art, writing sometimes represents a business. The same paradigms could then be functional for writers, too. The 22 “immutable” branding laws² put forward by Al Ries and Laura Ries [28] can be applied successfully

² These rules are: the law of expansion; the law of contraction; the law of publicity; the law of advertising; the law of the word; the law of credentials; the law of quality; the law of the category; the law of the name; the law of extensions; the law of fellowship; the law of the generic; the law of the company; the law of subbrands; the law of siblings; the law of shape; the law of colour; the law of borders; the law of consistency; the law of change; the law of mortality and the law of singularity.

to book branding as well. For example, law number 9, *The Law of the Name*, discusses the primary importance of the name chosen for a product or service, especially because, in the long run, a brand is nothing more than a name [28, 44]. If, at first, the unique concept or idea takes precedence, in time, the name will differentiate a product from another in the mind of the consumer. Nowadays, book titles employ provocative, unique, puzzling, symbolical, even shocking words that will, eventually, attract and maintain readers’ curiosity and loyalty.

Besides the rich collection of books on *how to* build and manage product/institutional/personal/professional/national, etc. brands, a great flow of new books has appeared theorizing book branding strategies, even if they do not state the terms as such. Various authors advise others on *how to* “publicize your book”, “sell your work”, “turn one book into a full-time living”, “plug your book”, “launch your brand, your business and your life”, and this article’s list of references can offer many other examples. In his guide book, Aaron Shepard [32] signals that writing gets closer and closer to the publishing trade by way of the *New Business of Self Publishing*.

Any author must be aware of the fact that his/her work is now a product which must comply with the rules of consumption, so books have become commodified brands and the branding process must involve efficient branding strategies. Books construct and constitute unique brands as markers of authorial identity. The brand seems to function like a label attached to an author’s

personality, one which gives the essential information about what the author wants to transmit so as to generate a sense of uniqueness. Moreover, building and promoting a successful book coincides with building and promoting both a celebrated product brand and a personality brand. Therefore, authors construct a (personal) brand as a marker of their identity in the postmodern commodified world by means of the books they create. The major trend is towards *digitalizing the author* and engaging the author in social media communication and online marketing practices in order to be visible, accessible, approachable and, thus, profitable.

If success is targeted, it seems imperative for a contemporary author to have adequate skills in two chief fields: commerce and technology. Firstly, the commodification of books refers to the fact that nowadays even artistic works have become products with commercial value besides their aesthetic and cultural one. The commercial weight attached to books is on the rise, and authors themselves can no longer get away from the rules of business. Secondly, an author's online social media engagement is crucial. It has proved to be very successful in England, it is only beginning in Romania, while in America there is an abundant market of specialists consulting authors in such matters. For instance, a quick search on the Internet shows that many English contemporary writers run their own sites or blogs. On the other hand, the visibility of Romanian contemporary writers in online media communication is almost absent.

MY BRAND IS MY WRITING: BOOK BRANDING STRATEGIES

The book branding process

In Jean-Noël Kapferer's terms, brands generally create value for the customer [20], and these values attract and maintain a consumer. The consumer culture entails that books offer both aesthetic and commercial values, so we may assume that there is a transfer between, and fusion of, the two types of values. Anyway, brands create value, and this means that they are something worth buying and having on the part of the customer.

Books help shaping personal brands for their authors. This idea suggests that, when building a personal brand, one's personal characteristics are embodied in the brand. Everything that person does must be consistent with the brand identity. But in case of book writing, in contemporary society, the importance of both writers and the books written has equal measure. In past centuries, the story/plot/contents of the book was much more important than the identity of the writer. But now it seems that, by means of the promotional and marketing strategies adopted, many writers want to become branded names creating personality brands, just as they want their books to be uniquely identifiable trademarks on the market.

The book-building process in general is a complex one, and Robert Darnton rebuilds this process, taking into consideration all the traditional agents contributing to the creation of this object, placing the process in a

circular, active, and multifaceted setting in which intellectual ideas, publicity, economic and social influences, as well as the political and legal regulations act as the background for the “communications circuit”³:

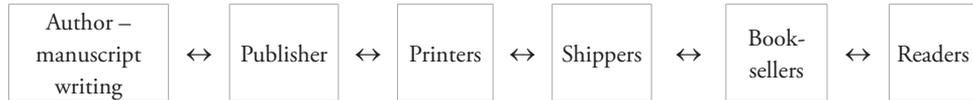


Fig. 2. Traditional book-building communications circuit

Some critics refer to book branding as being the marketing plan itself. But I consider that the book branding process involves, nowadays, all the complex steps of planning – writing – publishing – distributing – promoting – selling the book and reaching the consumer, since most of these stages engage new, complex, and innovative techniques and aspects which are similar to those ascribed to brands as defined in business books. Aggressive promotion seems to be particularly significant, in all possible (mass) media, from book shops, supermarkets, conferences, clubs, radio, television, newspapers, blogs, websites, street banners, flyers, posters, to social media groups. Figure 2 shows that in the first stages of the process, after writing his manuscript, the author collaborates with the publisher and then somehow disappears from the foreground, since other agents take

³ DARNTON, Robert. What is the History of Books? In Finkelstein, David; McCleery, Alistair (eds.). *The Book History Reader*. London & New York: Routledge, 2002, Ch. 2, *apud* LYONS, Martyn. *A History of Reading and Writing in the Western World*. Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, Figure 1.1, p. 7.

over and carry out the necessary steps to get the book out on the market. On the other hand, Fig. 3 reveals two essential aspects: first, all the phases dynamically communicate and correlate since the process itself needs

constant reworking, change, and adaptation; second, all the stages below are carefully and intensely prepared and carried out with the contribution of the writer himself since now, maybe more than ever, it seems imperative for an author to get actively involved in the project. This is because, among other things, books do not generally benefit from high rates of popularity anymore⁴.

The readers’ feedback and communicational involvement are also crucial, by way of consumers’ appreciation of the product and their participation in the reception and further promotion of books, and also through regular communication with authors, via electronic or other forms of communication.

⁴ For instance, Lidia Bodea, General Director of Humanitas Publishing House, one of the most important publishing houses in Romania, pointed out in 2009 that around 40% of the Romanian population does not read books at all. Access through Internet: <<http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-cultura-6601381-lidia-bodea-director-general-editura-humanitas-discutat-online-despre-rolul-cartilor-viata-romanilor.htm>> [accessed 15 November 2011].

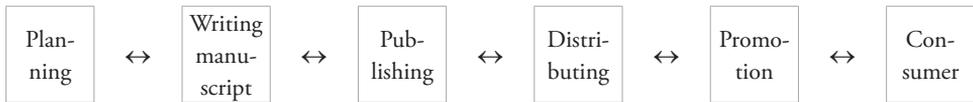


Fig. 3. Book branding strategies

Promotion seems to be the most important phase, with aggressive and persistent activities to ensure the visibility of the writer, especially under the form of *self-advertising*. American PR coach Pam Perry formulates some monthly, weekly, and even daily *Tips to Brand Your Book* [26], comprising techniques to continuously brand yourself and your work. Basically, if one should conform to Perry's counsels, then he/she should always be privately or publicly caught up in some kind of activity to maintain visibility and reader-recognition⁵. Online social media

⁵ Here is a list with daily actions as part of the branding process: 1. Write. Write. Write. That's your main job. Content is king!; 2. Read some trade pubs or read magazines in your niche; 3. Comment on someone else's blog; 4. Make a phone call to a media outlet you'd like to be featured on; 5. Read the daily newspapers looking for topics you can comment on; 6. Scan columns by the regular columnists and give feedback on their blogs; 7. Add friends to your Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn accounts; 8. Follow someone new on Twitter; 9. Add people to your database that you meet or have not been in touch with (with permission); 10. Add an automatic signature to all the emails your answer; 11. Twitter by sending a link to your blog, or a favourite blog, or a free report they can download; 12. Participate in message boards, chat group or yahoo groups that are industry related. This helps to increase exposure and give your information to stay on the cutting-edge.

engagement is vital in this process: you must get "googlicious" (meaning that you have to be very active on Google) [25], or you must be an active 'emailer', blogger, and user of Twitter if you want to be efficient in online marketing.

Even though statistic rates on the extent of reading are continuously declining, the number of books produced each year seems to be on the rise. Moreover, over the last 20 years a prolific market for writing guides has emerged. Starting from the assumption that "some writers are born, but most of us are trained", Scott Edelstein [11, 7] claims that most writing instruction manuals present the writing process as an activity which can be made proficient through careful and elaborate discipline and training. In effect, writing becomes a business for profit and public recognition. We can say that the how-to lists represent positioning strategies specific to any brand, including techniques aimed at placing/positioning a product/service in a certain position on the market, so that it can be recognized by the public. For example, Edelstein's *100 Things Every Writer Needs to Know* [11] is structured on tips and recommendations which are meant both to ensure a professional type of writing, but also to make the product, the book itself, visible, familiar, and marketable. First and foremost, it will arrange for the best conveyance of

authorial identity. Therefore, the stages of the writing process must follow a strict pattern, then there is counselling on how to build and improve your writing skills, as well as strategies to make money from your writing, or advice on building a successful writing career. Such a manual also incorporates a reference section [11, 235–245] with resources for writers, ranging from dictionaries, almanacs, or encyclopaedias, to writing courses or books and journals useful for editors, producers, publishers, and other types of production companies.

SELF-PUBLISHING OR AUTHORIAL DIRECT (SELF)BRANDING

Self-publishing is a very productive trend and practice both in the US and Europe. The author takes on multiple roles, writing and, most often, printing his/her book, also assuming other tasks which are commonly performed by publishing companies (editor, designer, promoter, marketer, distributor, even accountant roles). However, its definition enables us to see that in Romania self-publishing, even though it is not named as such, has functioned for centuries. Basically, the main reason is the authors' financial scantiness or their wish to minimize costs. Then, writers could also claim that, technically and financially speaking, Romania has always lagged behind as compared to Western European countries, so they often found it impossible to gain access to the publishing industry without some kind of sponsorship. This shows that this self-publishing practice has been a constant custom in Romania, and still is.

As a process, self publishing excludes the middle position of agent, just as it sometimes eliminates the publisher (especially rights-buying publishers), too. Self publishing means that an author takes the project of writing the book, editing the material, producing the book, promoting and placing it on the market (writing → producing → marketing → distribution). This is why the simplest form of the process involves only three basic agents. Mention should be made that the second stage, selling, does not necessarily involve a bookseller (bookshops or online retailers) considering that the cheapest means of selling entails that the writer could try selling his book without an intermediary, such as direct personal selling (at book fairs, in special places in supermarkets, on streets or at markets, in museums, etc.)

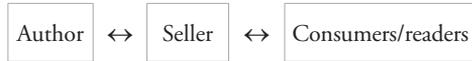


Fig. 4. Self-publishing stages

Still, as Linda and Jim Salisbury warn, it is important to work with a quality book packager or with publishing experts such as editors, typesetters, and cover designers in order to avoid an unprofessional end product [30, xvi]. The greatest advantage of self publishing is saving money. Similarly, the author keeps total control over his/her material. This way, he/she avoids the risk of not being published, as there have been so many cases in which the publisher no longer prints the book. Additionally, it keeps away the editor's interference in the text. The

author also maximizes profit, decides on the type of promotional campaign, and gains respect [30, 5–7].

Since many big publishing houses hardly accept new writers, self-publishing brings other advantages, too. For example, if a professionally self-published book exhibited in bookstores, book fairs or other places in the market place proves to grow popular among readers, then some big publisher may notice that and purchase the book or the rights to it. Richard Paul Evans, Margaret Atwood or Beth Fowler are only a few examples.

In Romania, writers carry out all these stages by themselves, most often benefiting only from the support of an editor once they take the manuscript to a publisher. In case of small publishers, the rest of the process, including marketing, promotion, and distribution is executed by the writer himself. Obviously, some of the consequences are high costs for books, insufficient promotion and market availability, not easily obtained public recognition or little public recognition, especially on external markets, difficult emergence on the literary market, etc. At the same time, there are few (if none) writing or self-publishing guides updated to contemporary times on the Romanian market, in the Romanian language, so access to newest ideas and technology is limited.

On the international market, there is also a *Self-Publishing for Dummies* edition which carefully considers and explains all the steps involved in this “do it yourself” process, from writing and editing the work, to administration and design aspects, printing

choices, distribution methods, or publicity and marketing. Jason Rich [27] makes reference to the numerous advantages of self-publishing, such as the fact that the writer can self-publish any type of content (from cookbooks and how-to books to literary anthologies or collections of artwork), reach the readers more quickly (you establish your own deadlines), earn more royalties, and boost career prospects, either as a professional writer or as an expert in the field. Nevertheless, some disadvantages could also arise, namely the costs and time needed (which might exceed initial plans), distribution obstacles (you have less chances to get your book into traditional bookstores, but there are more chances to get access to sites like Amazon.com), or the fact that you may need to hire professionals to assist you in the process (for instance, a ghostwriter/bookcoach⁶ to help you with writing the manuscript, then a photographer, illustrator, artist or graphic designer if the case, an editor to proofread your manuscript, a sales representative, a PR, an advertising and marketing consultant, and even a web site designer).

⁶ Bookcoaches/writing coaches instruct authors on how to write their books. They may advise on anything from choosing the topic, structure and format, style and grammar, editing and targeting audience (see more on <www.bookcoaching.com>). Sometimes, coaches undertake more functions which are similar to those of a literary agent. For instance, American coach Roger C. Parker guides authors to plan, write, promote, and profit from a book. Access through Internet: <<http://blog.publishedandprofitable.com/>> [accessed 1 April 2011].

Obviously, we can see that, even though most self publishing guides insist that the process saves money, in fact, the greatest benefit derives from building the end product which is closest to the author's intentions. Considering that books promote authorial identity, then self publishing probably reveals and represents the most accurate, minute, rigorous, thorough, and scrupulous production manner. It is the most truthful manner of rendering and representing the author's intentions and goals, no matter which these are. No matter the type of book, self publishing requires some essential skills: ability to work hard, finding the appropriate writing style for the audience, adding creativity and personality to the work, organizational skills, or being self-motivated against all obstacles. There are many 'recipes' for writing a successful or "winning" manuscript [27, 49] too, but I will only refer to a few: coming up with the "perfect" writing idea, organising and editing the material properly, researching your information, assigning appropriate timelines, considering format, layout, page design, covers, as well as title, price, ISBN, barcode, type of paper, etc. An essential aspect is to define your audience clearly and design your book's style and content according to the expectations of those prospective readers.

The basic printing option is traditional offset printing, which makes the process easier and readily available for the writer to use. Then, the writer must decide and manage inventories, handle orders, do paperwork, ship books to customers, and try to license, send or sell the book to a major publisher.

The publicity schemes are vital ingredients. For example, the author should make up a press kit [27, 250] including promotional material for distribution to the press before the release of the book. The press release should be carefully prepared, the author's biography should respect some guidelines, and even the publicity photo must be the best choice. At the same time, strategies to publicize the book for free include: "Talk it up" – prepare the perfect discourse for the media (anticipate possible questions, plan a catchy PR message, avoid mistakes, repeat the title of your book quite often); "Dress it up" – dress up in your best clothes and use appropriate body language; "Book it" – generate reviews; "Show it off" – plan author appearances and book signings, set up public events; "Leave it to the pros" – work with a publicist, because he will use the media to get you and your product noticed. Paid advertising can also be helpful: create your own ad and plan your advertising campaign, use promotional materials, such as book marks, postcards, excerpts from the book, book displays, create your own promotional website, choose opt-in mailing lists and electronic newsletters, create your blog, produce a podcast, or organize an online chat. The marketing plan can also include direct mail, PR campaigns, targeting existing clients or, if you are an academic, even your own students. By joining writer groups or clubs, by blogging, by running a personal website, or by joining Twitter and Facebook, the author is branding both his/her name and his/her book.

Since such guides adopt the instructional, advisory and practical approach to the topic under discussion, they also include tips on mistakes to avoid in self publishing. Rich [27, 341–344] makes up a top ten of such mistakes⁷.

Nevertheless, most books on self-publishing inform and advise authors to take the process one step further and to start their own self publishing business⁸, becoming publishers themselves (as limited companies). Striving to launch their own professional products while competing with the publishing giants, authors are once again guided to get actively involved in the business world. The main purpose is, of course, to make a profit.

Authors can also take advantage of other book formats to suit their various types of needs (aesthetic, financial, etc.). The *e-book* alternative to traditional books is advisable especially if we consider the costs involved. We can think of major American e-book publishers (such as Smashwords, Romeii

Publishers, or Borders Get Published), or of successful e-bookstore retailers like Amazon.com, Google Editions, Barnes & Noble, Apple iBookstore, or Sony. Additionally, if self-publishing reshapes book production practices and authorial involvement in the process, e-texts or hypertexts change reading customs, too. Here, readers are asked to interact with the text, and the process leads to knowledge construction [8].

POD is another option to supplant traditional printed book formats and, therefore, to reduce the costs for the production process. For instance, print on demand (POD) is an intermediary model between traditional and electronic books. David Viney shows that books are printed in smaller runs as required, thus eliminating unnecessary costs or other types of excess [34].

Amazon's createspace⁹ offers free publishing tools and POD services, as well as distribution on Amazon.com and other retailers, helping authors to self-publish their works in three basic steps: create your work, set up a title, and start selling. Still, most online services and tools are not free, but there is a dynamic community of authors and other professionals who exchange valuable information. For authors, two types of media formats are available: Books on Demand and KindleTM. Kindle, the portable e-book device from Amazon, provides wireless connectivity to Amazon for e-books and downloads, Wikipedia, and search engines.

⁷ 1. Not targeting the audience properly; 2. Imprecise information, poor organisation and poor writing; 3. Giving little attention to detail and editing; 4. Using money and resources inadequately; 5. Creating poor cover design and copy; 6. Choosing the wrong printing method; 7. Inefficient distribution; 8. Misusing online distribution; 9. No proper publicity and marketing campaign; 10. Bad timing.

⁸ See DORSEY, Jennifer. *Start Your Own Self-Publishing Business*. New York: Entrepreneur Press and Jennifer Dorsey, Entrepreneur Media Inc., 2007; also see MOFFETT, Jerry E. *Self-Publishing: The Art of Turning Words into Cash*. New York: Jarett Publishing Company, 1994.

⁹ Access through Internet: <<https://www.createspace.com>> [accessed 10 May 2011].

Book branding and authorial identity promotion features in England and Romania

All the aspects discussed above enforce our claim that the book has become a cultural object which, by virtue of numerous production and marketing strategies, is continuously branded, and it contributes to the branding and promotion of authorial identity, too. In this process, the *digital culture* concept showcases the special role of the digitalization of writers and their readers. Analysing briefly the sections on the websites of two well-known contemporary English writers, namely Kate Atkinson¹⁰ and Ian McEwan¹¹, we can easily notice that they are well aware of the importance of fulfilling all those duties of authorship put forth by writing guides. For instance, Kate Atkinson's site contains biographical notes, information on her books (and the possibility to buy them online), as well as resources (FAQs, reading groups). Ian McEwan's website adds sections on public appearances and events, interviews, and a link to his Facebook account. Therefore, the modern reader has the possibility to communicate with favourite writers online, and this is a great step in facilitating communication. Such a strategy fosters a close relationship with the readers, and writers actuate and maintain contact with the students who read their works. In Ian McEwan's case, the "student" or "help for

students" areas offer educational support by including critical editions and guides to his novels. Just as hypertexts do, these strategies invite the readers to participate, transforming them into partners in the literary or educational process.

Clearly, most English authors have adapted to the present times when aggressive marketing and promotional techniques ultimately (re)shape and communicate their continuous strive to make their brand known, visible, sold, and celebrated. Originality and market appeal seem to be two weighty criteria for a writing project to become successful.

One of the pioneering literary agents in America, Richard Curtis, brought to public attention the vital contemporary roles of literary agents when he initiated a monthly column in *Locus*, entitled "Agent's Corner", early in 1981, arguing that the socio-economic conditions force writers to be instructed in the business side of writing. He emphasizes the social responsibility of publishers and literary agents, seeing that "the publishing and writing professions find themselves in the most precarious state of all time" [10, xi], especially because of the economic and technological factors affecting them. Many publishing houses have collapsed, have been taken over or have merged, most of the times with negative effects on literary culture. Anyway, we notice that the end user of the process, the reader, is slowly eliminated from the discussion as long as the agent's and publisher's financial interests, and oftentimes those of the writer,

¹⁰ Access through Internet: <<http://www.kate-atkinson.co.uk/>> [accessed 5 April 2011].

¹¹ Access through Internet: <<http://www.ianmcewan.com/>> [accessed 5 April 2011].

claim supremacy over the cognitive and aesthetic interests of the reader. Needless to say, publishers care less about quality and focus on how a book will sell.

Curtis' approach to literary culture trends in contemporary times takes us closer to our interpretation of book production as a branded/branding process. More than that, Curtis suggests that writers, publishers and agents themselves must be brand names if they want to arouse customer loyalty. A cause may be that readers are brand-name conscious: sometimes they select the name of the publisher, but they are frequently much more selective about their favourite brand names, the authors themselves. In our consumerist society, readers become clients/customers who show *brand loyalty* and *sensitivity* towards certain brands which respond to their sets of values and expectations from the world of material culture.

Consumer interest is triggered by many types of brand names: a) authoritative titles (M.D., Ph.D, Director) or b) sponsoring companies (such as Marlboro, Ford, Procter and Gamble) [10, 107]. But we may also add c) individual brand names which refer to personality brands, such as J.K. Rowling, Stephen King, J.R.R. Tolkien and others. Such names ensure the brand's reputation on the market, and activate readers' brand loyalty. "Being a name" [10, 108], namely possessing good credentials, leads to successful reception. On the other hand, writers who are not names are generally turned down by publishing companies. So, a new type of alliance could provide a solution: the

partnership between arts and business, with several advantages on both sides. Hence, such authors should either self publish their work or connect with a brand-name company in the same field and try to convince the firm to sponsor the book, and so, cosmetic or fragrance companies could support romance novels. For example, Fay Weldon's novel *The Bulgari Connection* (2002) was sponsored by the Bulgari company, so Bulgari's jewellery, watches, accessories, fragrances or leather goods benefited from literary promotion. Likewise, the author obviously profited from the partnership in multiple ways. The somewhat irredeemable divergence between the field of art and that of commerce has led, in Weldon's case, to public accusations of *anti-art*¹². Indeed, the *commodification* and *commercialization of arts* expose the contemporary partnerships between arts and economic practices with the common target of raising public interest in cultural production.

Unfortunately, the employment of such branding strategies seems to be delayed, unknown, or maybe unappealing for many Romanian authors.

Firstly, related to the aspect of the digitalization of arts and culture, we notice that many Romanian contemporary writers do not run their own websites, so many Internet users and readers might feel that they

¹² O'KELLY, Lisa. Review for *Nothing to Wear and Nowhere to Hide*, in *The Observer*, 22 September 2002, Access through Internet: <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2002/sep/22/fiction.fayweldon>> [accessed 2 September 2011].

benefit less from these authors' interactive presence except from the printed books they find in bookstores. More than that, some major Romanian publishers do not contain electronic book catalogues. For instance, Polirom launched its first collection of e-books in September 2011. In July 2011, the same publishing house started selling its first e-book before issuing the printed version of Alex. Leo Șerban's novel *Litera din scrisoarea misterioasă*¹³. Another well-known Romanian publisher, Nemira, inaugurated its first collection of e-books in October 2010¹⁴.

Secondly, Romanian authors do not seem to benefit from the types of partnerships discussed above, which could supply the writers with the necessary money both to produce and market their books intensely. This is probably because the Romanian world of culture and its representative figures have not totally detached themselves from communist views or fears, and some of them still show resistance to capitalist ideas or to such solutions that could create mutually advantageous cultural and business associations. For instance, if a company sponsors a cultural activity (debate, club, competition, book production, book reading sessions), in return, the artist/writer could promote the activity of that sponsoring firm (on book

launch posters or flyers, on personal blogs, on book covers) and even share part of the profit from sales.

Moreover, many of the book and authorial branding strategies presented in this paper are cost-effective, so they could prove their usefulness when the argument of financial scarcity is invoked. The benefits of new technologies could help authors both to reach greater numbers of readers in Romania, and to exceed the national borders.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the study have emphasized three main theoretical and practical aspects.

Firstly, art and commerce have merged so as to respond to the novel demands of the contemporary market, while books and their authors embark on a commercial venture. Books turn into marketable products, so they – and their authors – must comply with the rules of the market place. Hence, the book has become a commodified object which, by virtue of numerous production and marketing strategies, is continuously branded, and it contributes to the branding and promotion of authorial identity, as well.

Secondly, it seems that professionally written, produced, and marketed books guarantee personal branding success. This way, product branding unavoidably interacts with, and sets off, authorial position, acknowledgement, and reputation in the world of letters. The contemporary literary market demonstrates that successfully branded books guarantee product and personal success. *Self-publishing, active online media presence,*

¹³ Access through Internet: <http://www.suplimentaldecultura.ro/index/continutArticolNrIdent/Actualitate/6842> [accessed 7 September 2011].

¹⁴ Access through Internet: <http://www.nemira.ro/blog/nemira-lanseaza-platforma-de-e-books> [accessed 7 September 2011].

aggressive marketing, or the *partnership of arts and commerce* constitute some significant strategies of the twenty-first century book branding investigated in this paper.

Finally, English authors and their books have adapted to the new realities of the cultural, economic and technological environment, and they are actively engaged in the world of marketing and online communication, conforming to their rules and strategies which actually aim at the best possible ways to convince clients to buy. The *digitally proficient writer* seems to be the most successful literary figure on the market since he fulfils an imperative requirement of contemporary society, that of upholding and strengthening immediate communication, interaction,

and networking. The American writers or the English ones clearly conform to all the changes in socio-cultural, economic or technological environments and, what is more important, to ideological transformations. Currently, in many ways, most Romanian writers seem to have failed to keep up with the latest strategies in book and authorial branding presented here. However, their efforts must be noticed, appreciated, and encouraged, and Romanian book production, publishing, marketing and advertising could certainly benefit from increased development in the near future. This, of course, needs writers themselves to accept the pacts proposed by the digitalized and commodified world of culture.

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KNYGŲ KAIP PREKIŲ ŽENKLŲ SKLAIDA IR AUTORIAUS TAPATYBĖS REIŠMĖ: LYGINAMASIS POŽIŪRIS

MIHAELA CULEA

Santrauka

Kalbant apie knygų prekybą, nagrinėjama institucijų, asmenybių, korporacijų ir bendrųjų produktų, net turistinių prekių ir kitokių ženklų sklaida, tačiau apie pačias knygas kaip prekių ženklus dažniausiai nutylima, nors susidomėjimas knygomis ir jų kūrėjais kaip kultūros produktais akivaizdžiai didėja. Nėgana to, Robertos Sassatelli žodžiais galime teigti, kad vartojimo revoliucijos ir „žinių suprekinimo“ kontekste knygos tampa preke. Jei tautos, miestai, universitetai, verslo mokyklos, asmenybės, net televizijos programos yra prekių ženklai, tai ir knygas galima vertinti kaip prekių ženklus. Galima net sakyti, kad knygos – tai sukومercinti prekių ženklai ir jų sklaidos procesas turi apimti našias strategijas: autoriai kuria savo prekės ženklą kaip

savo tapatybės žymenį postmoderniame suprekiname pasaulyje.

Straipsnyje nagrinėjamos kai kurios šiuolaikinės knygų ir autorių kaip prekių ženklų sklaidos strategijos, kurių teorinį pagrindą sukūrė JAV autoriai, ir tai, kaip šias strategijas taiko Jungtinės Karalystės ir Rumunijos autoriai. Pirmiausia apibūdinami tyrimo tikslai, apimtis ir konceptualioji sistema, padedanti aptarti dabartines knygų kaip prekės ženklų sklaidos kryptis, taip pat aiškinama, kaip buvo pereita nuo klasikinių prekės ženklų tipų prie knygų kaip prekės ženklų, atskleidžiami svarbiausi knygų kaip prekės ženklų sklaidos ypatumai, kai kurios knygų ir autorių kaip prekės ženklų sklaidos strategijos ir jų naudojimo mastas

Jungtinėje Karalystėje bei Rumunijoje (autorinė leidyba, tekstų skaitmeninimas, menų suprekinimas arba meno ir verslo susiliejimas kaip šio reiškimo išraiška). Lyginamasis šių strategijų tyrimas išryškina Jungtinės Karalystės ir Rumunijos rašytinės kūrybos, vadybos ir rinkodaros praktikų skirtumus, kurie knygoms ir jų

autoriams padeda atitikti naujus kultūrinius ir komercinius poreikius.

Nagrinėti šią temą paskatino spausdintinės produkcijos, dabarties knygų leidybos ir spaudos kultūros aktualijos, rinkodaros diskursas ir jo praktika, kultūrinės produkcijos ir kultūros studijos apskritai.

Įteikta 2011 m. lapkričio mėn.