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Book Marketing: Before and During a Revolution in Publishing

David R. Wheeler
School of Business
Suffolk University
8 Ashburton Place
Boston MA 02108

Marketing in an industry rapidly going through a major revolution and transformation from pulp to electronic. A revolution in publishing is now exploding in effect, but consumers still read for the same reasons that they have in the world before the E-books. A business case is offered in this paper on the marketing of a book before the revolution in digital books and the aftermath. When first published, my book, which went under several titles, was then marketed using the state-of-the-art in book marketing. There was advertisements in magazines and newspapers, commercials on television, skits on TV shows, placards in bookstores, and national book tour of more than ninety television and radio appearances. The book contained a topic -- the "true" stories of people who claimed to have "perceived" the other side by having near death experiences. Brick-and-mortar bookstores were the only place the book reading consumer could acquire the book. After a number of years, the book became a remainder and the publishing rights reverted to the author.

The Internet began and soon Amazon.com became a powerful force in the selling of books, starting first with the pulp version, then electronic versions called E-books grew in popularity. The question is asked whether the E-book revolution is causing a fundamental change in the marketing of the new form of books.

Borders, started the year of 2010 with 330 bookstores, and after closing 200 stores were left with 130 by midyear, still forecasted in July of 2010 that the company would have almost 20% of the E-book market by July, 2011 (Trachtenberg July 7, 2010). Borders did understand the importance of the digital book market, but was too slow to implement their strategy. The September, 2011 issue of "Consumer Reports" reviewed the various E-book readers and on a sidebar noted that the Borders Kobe Reader was very good, but "... was launched too late to be included in ratings." In July, 2011, Borders announced the liquidation of the company.

The technologically advanced E-book, magazine, and newspaper devices are changing reading behavior. Jeff Bezos, Amazon's founder spoke of his company's Kindle Reader, "Everything is about getting the device to disappear so that you can enter the author's world" (Fowler, 2011). The Association of American Publishers (AAP) and the Book Industry Study Group surveyed almost 2,000 publishers. In 2008, E-books were significantly less than one percent of the total book market, but in two years, over one hundred million E-books were sold which was more than six percent of the total book market. The president of the APA wrote: "The printed word is alive and well whether it takes a paper delivery or digital delivery" (Bosman, 2011). And, the industry is responding by making applications for reading on iPhones, Kindles, Nooks "less distracting and more fun" (McCracken, 2011)

E-books are advertised in the same way as with their pulp counter-parts. "Runway Illusion" by Ken Stockwell in a space ad in "Flying" magazine (August 2011). Publisher: AuthorHouse for this E-book. An example of publicity can be seen in Tom Elliott's review in the "Mensa Bulletin, July 2011, of the E-book "The Dark and Deadly Sky: A Novel of the Roswell Incident." Elliott wrote: "The final confrontation occurs in the skies of New Mexico and turns Roswell into legend whose mystery still captivates the world." In the same article there were reviews of E-books of digital publishers such as iUniverse, Xlibris, and Lulu. Amazon sends emails with the message: "Purchase today at Amazon.com." An email from Amazon.com on July 20, 2011 advertised: "What's the big deal you say? Over 900 Kindle books are now on sale for \$0.99, \$2.99, and \$3.99."

Marketing is about reaching, presenting, and convincing a target market of the value of reading this book. This is true regardless of whether the book is bought in a brick-and-mortar store in pulp form, or at a Web store as an E-book. In an article in "The New York Times," Nick Bilton read a chapter of a book ("The Alienist," by Caleb Carr) on various digital instruments including the Amazon Kindle, Apple iPads, the Barnes & Noble Nook, an iPhone, a Windows Phone, a Google Android phone, a Google Android tablet, and a laptop computer. Finally, Bilton read a chapter in "a crumpled old print paperback." His reading of the book on an iPad offered "an immersive reading experience. I found myself jumping back and forth between my book and the Web, looking up old facts and pictures of New York City." However, when he read a chapter of the paperback book, "It took barely a paragraph for me to feel frustrated. I kept looking up things on my iPhone" (Bilton, August 11).

In conclusion, it does not seem to matter to the readers (consumers) whether they read a book digitally with the aid of an electronic device or in a pulp version. What matters is the same elements that are always important in marketing -- 1) is the target market aware of the product, and 2) is it of enough interest in it to buy the book? As it is true in developing any marketing strategy, identifying the target market's attitudes, interests, lifestyles, demographics, and behaviors are critical in the success of the endeavor. The marketing strategy for an E-book requires the positioning of the concept to segments of people with a shared psychographic (that is, an interest in the subject matter of the E-book).

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