

Heeding the reader's voice

Book marketing during the consumer decision journey

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Recent developments have revealed challenges and opportunities of the online medium for publishers, that have strongly influenced their efforts in marketing and book promotion. Direct marketing, such as advertising, and traditional publicity in the shape of press reviews and TV items, can no longer be sufficient in attracting consumers that are faced with the current wealth of media, and have the know-how on using the digital environment to their own advantage in for example selective searching on the internet, or exploring relevant online platforms, such as Goodreads. The emergence of social media has taken away the marketer's control to a significant degree. Traditionally, promotional activities are coordinated according to a fixed marketing strategy. The information flow bypassing these via word-of-mouth has been minimal in the past, but communication has seen a transformation in the social media era. Control over the content, timing, and frequency of information has faded away. The landscape has changed: the traditional, linear approach to marketing has made way for new tactics in which marketing managers have to monitor the flow of multimedia content from consumers and adapt to this new environment. This new approach has been compared to a game of pinball, which is interactive and unpredictable. The pinball metaphor also implies that companies have (partially) lost control of marketing activities.¹ Owing to the new room for discussion between consumers, information about products and services now originates in the midst of the marketplace, through consumers, as well. This information flow goes beyond a marketing strategy.

The power of traditional marketing has weakened: consumers are turning away from company-communicated information and are more inclined to trust and rely on recommendations and reviews by other consumers found on social media. Additionally, consumers are using traditional sources of advertising less (radio, television, magazines). Digital media enables consumer-to-consumer conversations and information exchange, and while it is impossible to control this directly, marketers can employ methods to shape these discussions, for instance by providing networking

¹ T. Hennig-Thurau, C. Hofacker and B. Bloching, 'Marketing the pinball way: Understanding how social media change the generation of value for consumers and companies', *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 27.4 (2013), pp. 237-238.

platforms and using blogs.² This has made for an exciting new playground, and by adapting to this new environment, publishers can monitor and moderate those marketing opportunities centred on the consumer. The shift in power from the marketer to consumer was predicted early at the start of the digital age, and while this has not capsized (yet), an evolution of consumer empowerment can be witnessed. Consumers have increased access and choice through digital technologies; they are more capable of consuming and producing content; they have the power to build reputation through network actions; and they can pool, mobilize, and structure resources for crowdfunding, crowdsourcing, creating new marketplaces, etc.³ The methods by which publishers can make use of consumer behaviour and harness their power, by reaching out to readers and interacting with them, will be the main focus of this thesis. Due to the changes in media consumption, publishers are now challenged with finding book marketing strategies that involve the voice of the reader. In exploring this, I will discuss how trade publishing's marketing can benefit from the promotion of reading culture through (online) interaction with readers, seen from the reader's decision-making process.

Contact between the author and the reader, as well as between the publisher and the reader, has changed in recent years, and these three different stakeholders have grown more close. As the popularity of social media grows, interactive bonds are formed. Authors will talk to their fans directly via Twitter or Facebook, giving off an informal and approachable impression. Through this, a sense of personal connection can be generated between authors and readers. The personal quality of the individual author facilitates that connection quite naturally, while the commercial image of the publisher, the business, the company, is less likely to encourage it. However, publishers and readers are progressively establishing their interactive bond in different ways. They are able to work together, for example via readers' blogs or YouTube videos featuring reviews. Furthermore, readers can contribute to eventual publications through crowdfunding, and readers can even create content, for example by writing fanfiction, which in some cases has been published. This exchange supports the discoverability of specific titles as there is a more direct communication by the

² W. Glynn Mangold and David J. Faulds, 'Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix', *Business Horizons*, 52 (2009), pp. 359-360.

³ L.I. Labrecque et al, 'Consumer power: Evolution in the digital age', *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 27.4 (2013), p. 259.

publisher with the audience, but also serves as a resource for publishers to learn more about what readers are interested in. This is thus beneficial on multiple accounts. Readers will find books that suit their interests faster and in more natural circumstances: the establishment of digital platforms encourages lively reader communities to exchange experiences and views with one another. The publisher is able to join, will directly advertise to and communicate with readers, and can at the same time tap into their minds: what drives them to buy a book? This form is very different compared to advertisements and commercials that are conveyed to anyone, anywhere. Those promotional activities are commonly aimed at a broad and general audience as well (e.g. advertisements on bus benches will be seen by both readers and non-readers), while the interactive bond, this give-and-take between the reader and publisher in promoting titles via social media or blog reviews, has a much more specific aim at the relevant target group.

In our current fast-paced, technologically and digitally developed society, the use and remaining lifespan of 'traditional' media like print newspapers, magazines and books is regularly questioned. Granted, the book industry has had its setbacks in recent years: the global financial crisis of 2008 takes some of the blame, and our buying behaviour and our preferences for leisure activities have changed as well.⁴ Book production in The Netherlands however continues to thrive: 16,500 new titles were published in 2014, not counting the English and other foreign-language books that are sold in bookstores alongside with domestic titles.⁵ In addition, after consecutive years of declining book sales since 2008, they have started to pick up again since 2015.⁶

While these seem like positive developments for the market on the whole, the increased media consumption and growing numbers of titles have also caused worries for individual publishers: they are challenged by more competition than ever in the shape of new media and an overall increase in published stories. Preventing new books from drowning in this continuous overload of (different) media is no easy task. Trade publishers especially are pushed to constant innovation because of their dependence on trends and readers' changing interests, unlike for example educational publishers that market to schools and similar institutes instead of directly to individual consumers.

⁴ Koninklijke Vereniging van het Boekenvak, 'Kerncijfers algemene boeken', 2016, <<http://www.kvb.nl/feiten-en-cijfers/kerncijfers>> (28 April 2016).

⁵ KVB, 'Kerncijfers algemene boeken'.

⁶ Stichting Lezen, 'Boekenvak', <www.leesmonitor.nu/boekenvak> (28 April 2016).

As catering to those consumers, by targeting specific reader groups and researching preferences and habits in reading to ultimately attract buyers, is becoming increasingly important, so is the task of a marketer. Marketing departments have grown, slowly building a more prominent role in decision-making during the book publishing process, joining the editorial team as a leading force in the shaping of the end result.⁷

It should be established that, while research on publishing generally takes the English language market for an example or case study, this thesis will focus on trade publishing in the Netherlands. English language books make up the largest share of the market, as the US leads as largest publishing market with its absolute total of new published titles and re-editions (304,912), and the UK dominated with an incomparable number of new titles per million inhabitants (2875) in 2013.⁸ In comparison, a Dutch total of 16,582 new titles was published in the same year, with approximately 1000 titles per million inhabitants.⁹ Because of their dominant status, the US/UK markets tend to be the subject of choice in publishing research. For example, Thompson's great study of the publishing industry and its challenges in current times (discussed in a historical context), *Merchants of culture*, is an essential overview of recent developments and the state book publishing is in now. But Thompson centres his story in Britain and the United States, and although this covers a wide-ranging field, the structure of the English language market cannot easily be compared to that of the Dutch, or any other language for that matter.¹⁰ Other essential literature for anyone interested in an insider's view of publishing like Clark and Phillips' *Inside book publishing* or Albert Greco's detailed overview in *The book publishing industry* also provides a rich insight into the workings of larger publishing companies. These books are often used as informative analyses of the industry, but they are limited to business in the UK and US.¹¹ And while Alison Baverstock's successful guide *How to market books* explains methods and marketing strategies applicable to different markets, her basic assumption is that of the UK (or English) market and her story is supported by practical examples that are

⁷ M. Shatzkin, 'Marketing will replace editorial as the driving force behind publishing houses', *The Idea Logical Company*, 4 September 2013, <<http://www.idealogs.com/blog/marketing-will-replace-editorial-driving-force-behind-publishing-houses>> (8 September 2016).

⁸ International Publishers Association, 'Annual Report', October 2014 <<http://www.internationalpublishers.org/images/reports/2014/IPA-annual-report-2014.pdf>> (28 April 2016).

⁹ KVB, 'Kerncijfers algemene boeken'.

¹⁰ J.B. Thompson, *Merchants of culture: The publishing business in the twenty-first century* (Polity Press, 2012).

¹¹ G. Clark and A. Phillips, *Inside Book Publishing* (Routledge, 2014); A.N. Greco, *The book publishing industry* (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005).

either British, American or Australian.¹² Literature that is initially assumed to be international or generally applicable, is often inherently English-language focused because these are the largest, most prominent markets. In addition, since academics have embraced English as the international language of scholarship, English literature has better visibility, and more often than not, discusses the UK/US market. Markets, however, vary. Non-English markets will be in different situations, requiring different marketing strategies. For example, the popularity of e-books in the UK/US is incomparable to the humble role the digital counterpart plays in the Dutch market. Non-English markets also produce more translated literature, which could mean an additional barrier in marketing, as foreign authors will be more difficult and expensive to make appearances, and countries have different policies on matters like the fixed book price. I will explore this later in analysing the Dutch market situation. This thesis will focus on the Dutch market by applying English-language oriented research to the available current Dutch data.

Furthermore, publishing exists in a variety of types, each of which has its own playing field with different target groups, sales channels and consequently marketing focus areas. It should then just as well be noted that in this analysis, the focus is on trade publishing: the business of publishing books for the general public. Trade publishing is commercial: it entails books meant for leisure (fiction, like novels and children's books) and books for information (non-fiction, like biographies or cookbooks) aimed at a very broad audience. Trade books are commonly sold in the average bookshop and other consumer stores, such as supermarkets, or online (e.g. bol.com, the popular Dutch web shop similar to Amazon) and are available on loan through public libraries. In selling them, publishers heavily rely on marketing to the public and collaborations with booksellers. Books are also experience goods:¹³ consumers cannot be sure of their level of quality and worth until buying and experiencing them. They are products that consumers will not buy out of necessity, but only if they want to, which means they need to be convinced. Since evaluation of a book is difficult before reading it, convincing buyers is a challenge that is also amplified by the market predominantly revolving around supply instead of demand: the market's dynamics are based on the overwhelming supply of books. This consistent flow of many new titles makes for strong

¹² A. Baverstock, *How to market books* (Routledge, 2015).

¹³ P. Nelson, 'Information and Consumer Behavior', *Journal of Political Economy*, 78.2 (1970), pp. 311-329.

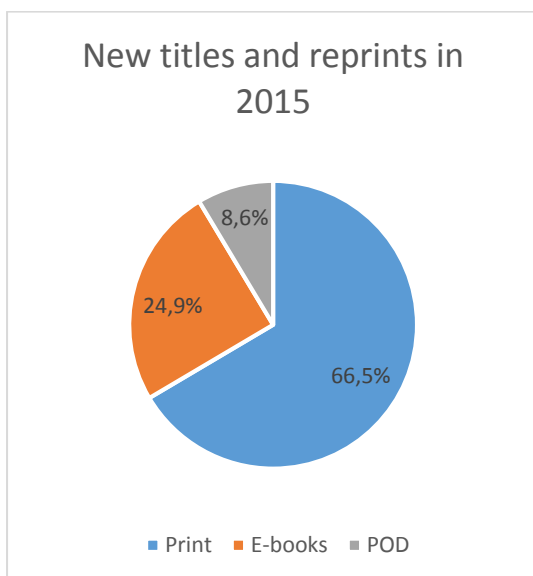
competition, especially in the literary fiction and non-fiction genres which are dominant and aimed at a broad, general audience, making it difficult to target readers.

After exploring the current market situation, I will argue how and why book marketing differs from marketing other products. My main analysis will cover the effects and possibilities of promotional activities and the use of different media during the consumer decision journey, in which a buyer forms a decision on their purchase. Within this framework, I will highlight the influential phases and accompanying examples of promotional actions to attract buyers. What requires more attention in order to boost sales and visibility of titles? The shift in book promotion by publishers can reveal current obstacles in bookselling and lead to new promising opportunities. Regarding the changing position of the book market and the current difficulties in winning over consumers, it is essential to analyse what publishers can do in marketing that involves the voice of the reader.

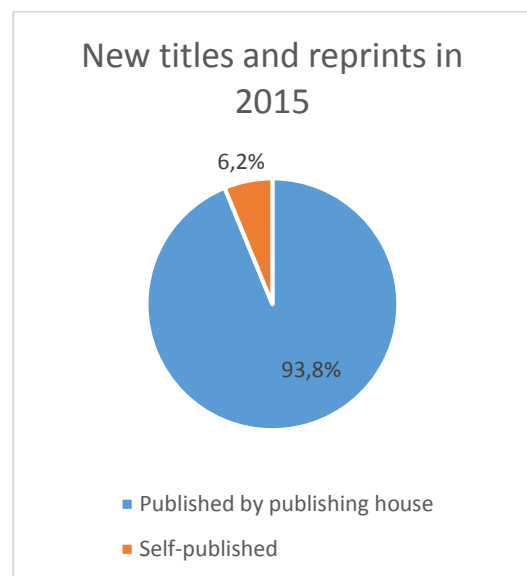
1 – The Dutch book market

Before discussing the previously mentioned interactive bond and related marketing opportunities for publishers, I would like to expand on the market Dutch publishers are subjected to and how the market's undercurrents are relevant to the promotion of books. Different countries maintain different traditions; they deal with different cultures and therefore different kinds of audiences; reading habits vary; and diversity nor the impact of new media are the same for every market.

Be it small in comparison to the English markets, for a country counting just 17 million inhabitants, the Netherlands has a substantial national book publishing industry: the Dutch market is among the twenty largest publishing markets in the world. In recent years the market has seen some decline, but in 2015 sales seem to slowly pick up again since the 2008 global financial crisis. Moreover, the Netherlands stand out in their recovery; the Dutch market is growing quicker than other European countries.¹⁴



1 Print is still the book format most used by publishers.¹⁵



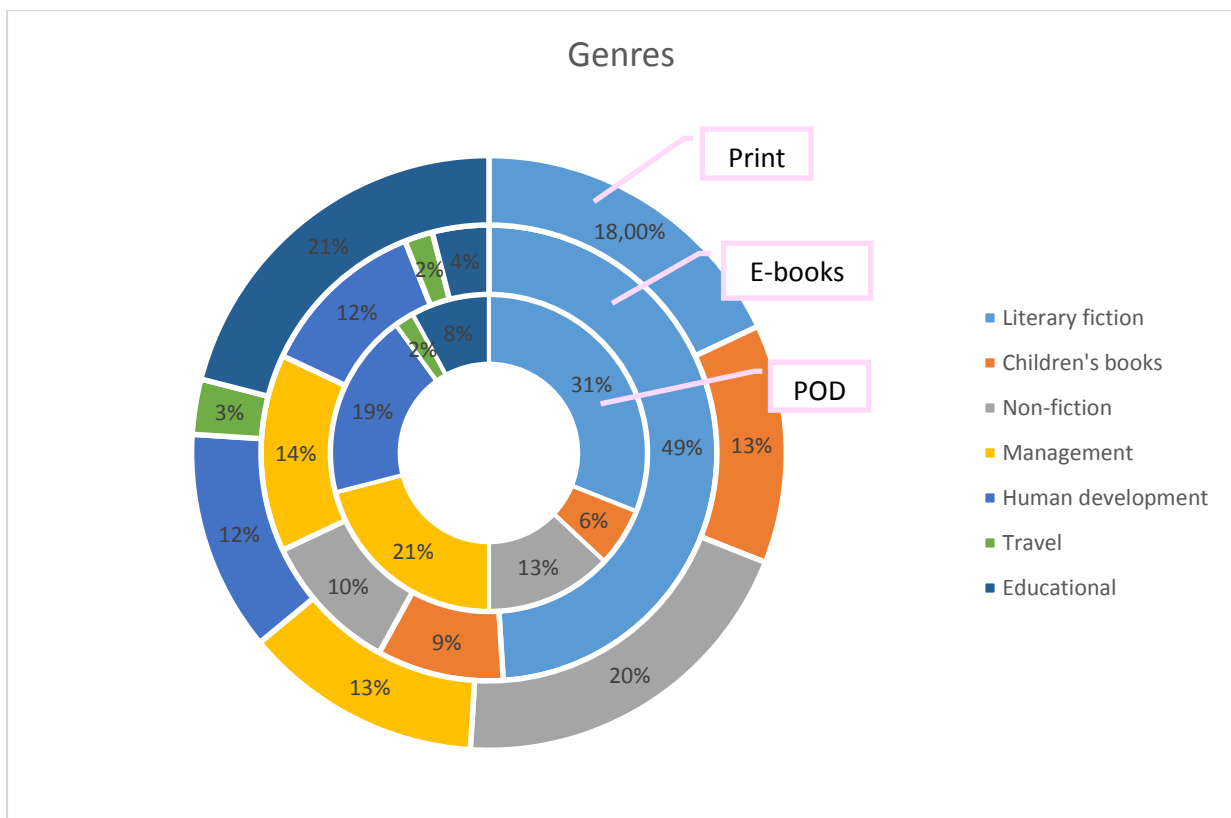
2 Of all published books, 6,2% is self-published.¹⁶

¹⁴ Stichting Lezen, 'Boekenvak'.

¹⁵ Centraal Boekhuis, 'Titel barometer', October 2015, <<http://www.cb.nl/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Infographic-titelaanbod-Q3-2015-NL.pdf>> (28 April 2016).

¹⁶ CB, 'Titel barometer'.

The Netherlands counts approximately 1200 book publishing houses. It has a high bookshop density with around 1300 physical bookshops, 160 online bookshops and almost 200 e-book retailers. As noted before, around 16,500 new titles are published yearly. When we include e-books and print-on-demand (POD) books (be it a relatively small addition to regular publications), the number ranges between 25,000 and 30,000 for the last five years. This includes general books (fiction, non-fiction) as well as educational and academic books. In 2015, the total number of new titles and reprints available on the market was 167,195.¹⁷ More than half of these are print books (see graph 1). In the division of genres, trade books are leading, as seen in graph 3 below.



3 Literary fiction is one of the most popular genres in books.¹⁸

Dutch e-book sales have slowly increased over the last few years, but contrary to the expected fast growth, as well as the expectation for e-books to gain an upper hand in

¹⁷ CB, 'Titel barometer'.

¹⁸ CB, 'Titel barometer'.

overall book sales, the popularity of the digital format has steadily remained close to the same for years now. E-books hold 5,8% of the sold copies total, with literary fiction being sold (and lent) the most amongst all available genres.¹⁹ Despite its small share in the market and the flattening growth rate, e-books were showing a higher individual growth rate than physical books in sales in 2015.²⁰ The e-book market is relatively flat (or declining) in most of Europe. For example, in the United States, about as many e-books were sold as hardcover editions in 2014, while the European uptake of e-books has been very slow and consequently unable to compensate the loss of physical book sales.²¹

The Dutch reading audience mostly consists of people aged 65 and over, women, and those with higher education. Young people are reading less and less: youths between the ages of 13 and 19 spent 10 minutes reading in a day in 2015; just over half as much they read in the previous year.²² Meanwhile, people aged 65 and up spend 79 minutes reading. Older people often read more regional novels, while younger people prefer literary novels, science fiction, comic books and poetry. Books are more popular with women than they are with men; the only genres that are read more by men are books on war and resistance, science fiction, and comic books.²³

1.1 – Standing out among the crowd

It has been argued for centuries that the (international) book industry suffers from overproduction. Tim Parks illustrates this in his account on how our ability to choose qualitative literature has come to be burdened by the large quantity of books.²⁴ The situation is comparable to the information load we are provided with by the internet nowadays, as anyone, individuals and corporations great and small alike, has the power

¹⁹ Centraal Boekhuis, 'E-book barometer', October 2015 <<http://www.cb.nl/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/E-book-infographic-NL-Q3-2015.pdf>> (28 April 2016).

²⁰ Stichting Lezen, 'Boekenvak'.

²¹ R. Wischenbart, 'The business of books 2015: An overview of market trends in North America, Europe, Asia and Latin America', October 2015, <http://www.book-fair.com/pdf/buchmesse/wp_the_business_of_books_2015.pdf> (21 May 2016).

²² Stichting Lezen, 'Wie lezen er?', <<http://www.leesmonitor.nu/wie-lezen-er>> (20 February 2017).

²³ Stichting Lezen, 'Wie lezen er?', <<http://www.leesmonitor.nu/wie-lezen-er>> (6 May 2016).

²⁴ T. Parks, 'Too many books?', *The New York Review of Books*, 16 April 2015, <<http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2015/04/16/too-many-books>> (28 June 2016).

to produce online content, resulting in the mixed pile-up of countless hits after a quick search on Google.

In producing many titles in short periods of time, publishers can increase their chances at hitting a bestseller and at the same time soften the blow of their underselling titles. This is something only big players can afford to do, but at the same time their ability to accommodate these titles with equal, sufficient guidance is questionable. Hence smaller publishers are likelier to be more liberal with their time because they coordinate fewer books, but in turn their funds cannot be compared to those of larger publishers. The increase in book supply illustrates a flourishing, growing market, but competition grows with it; this emphasizes the necessary consideration of methods targeting consumers in order to highlight titles.

The Dutch market is familiar with the criticism of the supply being too large, bearing too many qualitatively low products that could be avoided, and showing many of the same kinds of books.²⁵ Professionals are aware that they should employ different methods in selling their books: a stronger focus is key. But while the average thriller is available for a dime a dozen and seems disposable, authors of books with a greater literary value sometimes write a bestseller after having published several works already. To pass on those potential sellers would surely be regretful. In addition, the huge supply of domestic titles is in competition with books in other languages too: English language books are very popular, and bookshops regularly own sections that feature books in languages other than Dutch. Titles thus struggle not only with domestic competition, but compete with imported books as well. Whether the overload of material is daunting or admirable, the extreme competition demands a smart approach to putting a spotlight on anything in particular. This is where the achievements of a publisher's public relations and marketing department become vital to a book's success rate in sales.

²⁵ 'De boekenberg bestaat niet', *Vrij Nederland*, 5 March 2008, <<https://www.vn.nl/de-boekenberg-bestaat-niet>> (19 May 2016).

1.2 – The power of the bestseller

The bestseller status is relative: after all, a Dutch bestseller sells fewer copies compared to a hit in the US or UK. Ideas on how many sold copies define a bestseller in the Netherlands differ; there is no clear answer to this question. The average print run is between 2000 and 3000.²⁶ 10,000 copies means a book is selling exceptionally well and 25,000 generally already counts as a bestseller.²⁷ The book market is sensitive to hits: one look at a bookstore's window and you will be far more likely to see the new John Grisham than an obscure debut (which may be just as good, or better). Indie bookshops may be exempted from this, but most booksellers will showcase the top bestselling titles of the moment, and pay little attention to the publisher's backlist or cult favourites. But bestsellers only make up a small share of sold titles, and it has been decreasing in recent years: In 2015, 13.4% of all sold titles consisted of 'bestsellers'. In 2016, the number had gone down to 12.4 %.²⁸ Meanwhile, the collection of titles not ticking the bestseller box is actually largely driving the market. Even though markets focused on media like books - but also music, games, or movies - offer a vast and endless seeming supply of products, we are mostly aware of the hits and top sellers. Retailers logically will spend their limited time, space, and money on the items that have the best odds, while there is a huge, less popular supply out there. Chris Anderson describes this as the Long Tail, referring to the stretched-out curve following the peak of hits (see graph 4). In analysing Internet businesses with an infinite 'shelf space', like Netflix and Amazon, he noted there is a hidden majority of sales closed on niches, and that as these companies increasingly offered more, demand would follow supply. Individual sales of obscure titles are not noteworthy, but multiply this with the huge number of Tail products and it will make for a big number anyway.²⁹

²⁶ Frankfurter Buchmesse, 'Details book market Netherlands 2015', <http://www.buchmesse.de/images/fbm/dokumente-ua-pdfs/2016/buchmarkt_niederlande_en_2015_150316_57145.pdf> (28 February 2017).

²⁷ Frankfurter Buchmesse, 'Details book market Netherlands 2015'.

²⁸ Centraal Boekhuis, 'Boekenbarometer Q3 2016', October 2016, <<https://www.cb.nl/uploads/images/Boekenbarometer-Q3-2016-NL.pdf>> (28 February 2017).

²⁹ C. Anderson, *The long tail* (Hyperion Books, 2006), pp. 15-20.



4 Chris Anderson's Long Tail.

Anderson argues that the more companies can connect supply and demand, and uncover the majority of products that are snowed under by the hits, the likelier the numbers and consequently the entire market will change. He states:

“This is not just a quantitative change, but a qualitative one, too. Bringing niches within reach reveals latent demand for non-commercial content. Then, as demand shifts toward the niches, the economics of providing them improve further, and so on, creating a positive feedback loop that will transform entire industries—and the culture—for decades to come.”³⁰

Through creative marketing, publishers can add to an awareness of hidden gems and help to break through the book industry’s bestseller-mindedness.

By collecting sales data from Dutch bookstores, the *Stichting CPNB* (*Collectieve Propaganda van het Nederlandse Boek*, or Collective Promotion for the Dutch Book), an organization founded for the purpose of book promotion and stimulating people to read, keeps track of titles that sell especially well in a short period of time. The results of their analyses are presented weekly in the *Bestseller 60*, a top-60 of bestselling Dutch books, which is made openly accessible online.³¹ CPNB has called a bestseller a loose term,

³⁰ Anderson, *The long tail*, p. 26.

³¹ Stichting Collectieve Propaganda van het Nederlandse Boek, ‘De Bestseller 60’, <<http://www.debestseller60.nl>> (3 May 2016).

which publishers can use to their own advantage in promoting books. CPNB's use of 'bestseller' in its ranking list showcases the lack of a definition again, because the number of sold copies that put a book on the list in one week can be very different in the next. When exactly a title can be dubbed a bestseller also varies per publisher. Lebowski Publishers regards more than 10,000 sold copies a 'seller', more than 25,000 a 'bestseller'; Podium thinks of more than 60,000 in bestselling terms, although this idea remains vague and seems to depend on the book. Poetry and literary novels may demand fewer sold copies compared to more easy accessible genres.³² From an international perspective, these numbers seem unimpressive in comparison to bestsellers in the United States: a popular book could reach 250,000 in its first week in US stores.³³

Bestsellers are not just a result of effective marketing: they are simultaneously employed as marketing instruments. Upon achieving bestseller status, authors and publishers do wise to seize this promotional opportunity to broadcast a title's popularity as much as possible. Bookstores commonly also reserve corners or shelves for bestselling titles; for example, retailer Bruna displays a top-10 in their stores, often placed in the front area of the shop. Reprints are also often marked with a sticker or a comment stating the book's number of sold titles or achieved bestseller position. The marketing power that lists like *The New York Times* bestseller list – one of the top recognized national bestseller lists in the US – have, seems more impressive than their (uncertain) reports of what is actually selling. *The New York Times* keeps the number of sales for their titles confidential for example, out of fear for manipulation of the rankings. Would the minimum number of copies sold to achieve bestseller status be known, it is thought to be likely for authors or publishers to buy up their own books and wrongly reach the list.³⁴ One such case sparked a discussion on who defines what a bestseller is: according to Nielsen Bookscan (data provider for the book publishing industry), senator Ted Cruz's book *A Time For Truth* sold 11,854 copies in its first week. Despite selling well, the book was not ranked on *The New York Times'* list. Ted Cruz' presidential campaign accused the *Times* of not granting the title a ranking position and being politically biased in rankings that ought to be based on hard numbers and facts.

³² Hebban, 'De vraag: Wanneer is een boek een bestseller?', 7 May 2016
<<https://www.hebban.nl/artikelen/wat-is-een-bestseller>> (19 May 2016).

³³ B. Hill and D. Power, *The making of a bestseller* (Dearborn Trade Publishing, 2005), p. 20.

³⁴ Hill and Power, *The making of a bestseller*, p. 19.

However, the *Times* responded that they found Cruz's sales were limited to strategic bulk purchases; the book may have sold many copies in short amount of time, but it was evident to the paper that those sales came from a relatively low number of places (for example, 5000 copies could be purchased at once to sell at a supermarket). To avoid clutter from bulk purchases and to keep the list 'authentic', the *Times* also analyses sales patterns besides numbers.³⁵ The mechanics of book ranking lists in the Netherlands know similar controversy as lists vary in their selection of questioned book retailers, and stores present conflicting rankings as they often compose their own lists.³⁶ The previous example illustrates that the definition of a bestseller is not as straightforward as an absolute number of sold copies, but that various factors are at play. As PR director of The New York Times Company Toby Usnik says, "there is no magic number" to qualify for a position on the list. Positions depend on the weekly comparisons between sales for all titles.³⁷

The Dutch equivalent to the NYT list is the earlier mentioned *Bestseller 60*, of which the composition is based on sales data collected from over 900 book retailers (this measured 89% of the total Dutch general book market in 2015). Sales that publishers make outside of these channels, for example to libraries or other parties, are not taken into account.³⁸ Bestseller lists are watched closely, but their use of data is dubious as there is not always full disclosure of their methodology, and there is ample room for manipulation. The *NYT* uses a report sheet on which booksellers give an indication of how many copies were sold. This pre-composed sheet lists a selection made by the *NYT*, making it vulnerable to being influenced by how much different books have been promoted. Additionally, it is uncertain whether the selection of booksellers chosen to survey is diverse enough (big chain stores will have different bestsellers from specialized indie shops). In this regard, Dutch data gathering seems more trustworthy since a royal 89% of the market is covered. There is however also a risk of sellers (deliberately) misreporting their sales numbers, making the list vulnerable to being manipulated. If a retailer has trouble selling a title they liberally stocked up on, for

³⁵ D. Abrams, 'When is a bestseller not a bestseller? When the NYT says so', *Publishing Perspectives*, 13 July 2015, <<http://publishingperspectives.com/2015/07/when-is-a-bestseller-not-a-bestseller-when-the-nyt-says-so>> (6 June 2016).

³⁶ E. van Boven, *Bestsellers in Nederland. 1900-2015* (Maklu, 2015), pp. 46-49.

³⁷ Hill and Power, *The making of a bestseller*, p. 20.

³⁸ KVB Boekwerk, 'Toelichting op de gebruikte bronnen', <<http://kvbboekwerk.nl/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2016/10/Toelichting.pdf>> (19 April 2017).

example, a place on a popular ranking list will certainly help create an increase of sales.³⁹ The Dutch *Bestseller 60* is susceptible to this kind of manipulation as well, because no raw data is used in composing the list: all data is delivered anonymously and cannot be traced back to the individual retailers.⁴⁰

Every year the CPNB presents the top-100 of bestselling books of the year. In 2015, *Dit kan niet waar zijn* by Dutch journalist Joris Luyendijk, who spent two years in the City in London to investigate the financial sector, was ranked first place, having sold 306,866 copies in one year.⁴¹ The previous year the number one book (*Kieft* by Michel van Egmond) sold 159,163 copies; the year before that, Dan Brown's *Inferno* (Dutch translation) sold 376,775 copies.⁴² Translated works like *Inferno* make up a large part of the Dutch market, namely around 60% (of which 45% consists of works translated from English and the other 15% of all other languages: mostly French, German, Spanish and a recent increase in Scandinavian languages).⁴³ This goes for many other countries as well, such as Poland (46% is translated), Germany (over 12%), Spain (around 24%) or France (around 15%). Meanwhile, the US and UK markets seem to be more reluctant in publishing foreign literature: the US counts 3% and only 2.5% of all publications in the UK are translated.⁴⁴ Not only is the Dutch market very familiar with foreign titles, those titles frequently make their way to the bestseller lists as well, competing with originally Dutch works. In fact, by zooming in on the *Bestseller 60* rankings in 2016, it is revealed that a striking third to almost half of bestsellers are translations:⁴⁵

³⁹ L.J. Miller, 'The bestseller list as marketing tool and historical fiction', *Book History*, 3 (2000), pp. 286-304.

⁴⁰ KVB Boekwerk, 'Toelichting op de gebruikte bronnen'.

⁴¹ Stichting Collectieve Propaganda van het Nederlandse Boek, "'Dit kan niet waar zijn" best verkochte boek van 2015', 14 January 2016, <<http://web.cpnb.nl/actueelbericht.vm?ab=710>> (6 May 2016).

⁴² Stichting Collectieve Propaganda van het Nederlandse Boek, 'Kieft van Michel van Egmond best verkochte boek van 2014', 8 January 2015, <<http://web.cpnb.nl/actueelbericht.vm?ab=610>> (6 May 2016); Stichting Collectieve Propaganda van het Nederlandse Boek, 'Inferno van Dan Brown best verkochte boek van 2013', 9 January 2014, <<http://web.cpnb.nl/actueelbericht.vm?ab=492>> (6 May 2016).

⁴³ M. den Engelsman, 'Aandeel vertaling van Scandinavische auteurs groeit het hardst', *Boekblad*, 12 March 2015, <<http://boekblad.nl/Nieuws/Item/aandeel-vertaling-van-scandinavische-auteurs-groeit-het-hardst>> (28 February 2017).

⁴⁴ J. Zgadzaj and N. Roberts, 'Books in translation: It's time for others to join the fight', *Publishing Perspectives*, 15 February 2013, <<http://publishingperspectives.com/2013/02/books-in-translation-its-time-for-others-to-join-the-fight>> (8 September 2016).

⁴⁵ CPNB, 'De Bestseller 60'.

2016		
Week	Number of translated works	Number 1 is a translated work
1 (January)	20	-
5 (February)	22	-
9 (March)	25	-
13 (April)	25	<i>Saturday Requiem</i> by Nicci French
17 (May)	24	-
22 (June)	22	-
26 (July)	27	<i>The Kept Woman</i> by Karin Slaughter
31 (August)	28	-
35 (September)	27	-
40 (October)	18	-
44 (November)	17	-
49 (December)	17	-

The English markets are remarkably reluctant in buying foreign rights, a phenomenon often reasoned to be based on fear of translated works being hard to market. But if translations cope with extra obstacles in marketing, how can they (seemingly) effortlessly achieve a bestseller ranking? It may be assumed that authors in other countries are difficult to book for promotional activities like festivals, events and television appearances, considering the logistics but also the language barrier. Publishers depend heavily on book reviews as well, which usually focus on domestic works.⁴⁶ But despite having similar issues, other markets do not perceive translated works as big risks in publishing, at all. One important factor in this is the promotion of translated works to the home market. There has been a rise of independent reviewers online; bloggers are more open to translated literature than mainstream media are. For example, Istros Books, a small publisher trying to bring Balkan books to the UK, reached out to potential readers by relying on literary bloggers and investing in relationships with these individuals as they are able to make their own choices in books, while the common newspaper reviewer needs to stick to mainstream titles.⁴⁷

In recent years in the Netherlands, the number-one titles range between 150,000-500,000 sold copies per year; the number strongly fluctuates. After a drop in overall sales, 2015 was the first year to see growth: this showed in the number of copies

⁴⁶ Zgadzaj and Roberts, 'Books in translation'.

⁴⁷ Baverstock, *How to market books*, p. 20.

sold per bestseller as well. Not only are the media and retailers keeping an eye on ranking lists, publishers also greatly value these lists and use them for promotion when a book is an apparent hit. The bestseller status, rather than a purely factual rank, also appears to be a marketing instrument that is exaggerated by publishers and media. A bestseller can eventually be born through marketing, perhaps even more so by the publisher's influence than by that of reviewers.

1.3 – Fixed book price

The Netherlands has maintained a fixed book price (FBP) since 2005. The law was introduced in order to prevent competition in the shape of price battles between booksellers, and give publishers the chance to also produce less profitable books.⁴⁸ Small, independent bookshops would struggle to survive in competing with supermarkets and similar stores. This argument is emphasized when, for example, comparing the situations in France (FBP) and the UK (no FBP): France counts 2500 independent booksellers, representing 22% of total sales. In the UK, one third of independent bookstores has closed since 2005. Now only 4% of total sales originate from these smaller shops.⁴⁹ In the Netherlands the fixed book price was renewed in 2015 for another four years after review, despite criticism expressed by the Council for Culture (the Dutch legal advisor of the government in the fields of the arts, culture and media). The council reported to detect little evidence of the desired effects of FBP (the survival of independent bookshops and the promotion of 'risky' titles), but deemed immediate abolishment unwise for economic reasons.⁵⁰ The market has changed much in recent years, and whether those changes are caused by the FBP alone is difficult to say. The fact that the number of bookshops is declining even with an active FBP, for example, is a worrisome phenomenon;⁵¹ but when making a comparison with Flanders

⁴⁸ Commissariaat voor de Media, 'Vaste boekenprij's', <<http://www.cvdm.nl/vaste-boekenprij's>> (5 May 2016).

⁴⁹ International Publishers Association, 'Global Fixed Book Price Report', 23 May 2014, <<http://www.internationalpublishers.org/images/reports/2014/fixed-book-price-report-2014.pdf>> (6 May 2016).

⁵⁰ J. van Velzen, 'Alle boeken in de bonus?', *Trouw*, 7 January 2015, <<http://www.trouw.nl/tr/nl/5009/Archief/article/detail/3824437/2015/01/07/Alle-boeken-in-de-bonus.dhtml>> (6 June 2016).

⁵¹ Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 'Verkooppunten van boeken in Nederland', <<http://www.ocwincijfers.nl/cultuur-media/inhoud/letteren/boekhandels-in-nederland>> (6 June 2016).

(no FBP), the Dutch bookshops-per-inhabitant strikingly count double the Flemish number.⁵² The Dutch FBP law makes an exception for e-books, as this would not promote digital innovation. The diversity of e-books is also not as dependent on sales through physical shops, and the cost of stocking e-books is significantly lower compared to that of physical books.

Not only would FBP support the diversity of retailers, this in turn also supports a greater diversity of available books. As larger stores commonly only sell new and bestselling titles, books that do not appeal as much to the general audience would not stand a fair chance without enough retailers willing to sell them. This can then impact the publisher, who may be more reluctant in taking risks with debut novels, specialist titles, etc. FBP thus supports a wide range of different titles on the market, which contributes to our cultural heritage as well as stimulates people to read and allows for them to discover more books than they would through a single retailer. Evidence for the increase in 'risk-taking' by publishers since FBP implementation is however yet to come forward, while the main condition for FBP to exist is to stimulate publishers and booksellers in bringing more uncommon titles to the market.⁵³

FBP is usually also criticized in light of the free market and the industry's development. Maintaining FBP means fewer opportunities for sales and marketing: pricing actions to attract more buyers are impossible. Hence FBP is not only seen as a protective policy, but as a caging one as well, limiting the possibilities in selling a book. In addition, lack of proof that publishers actually take more business risks with difficult titles in FBP countries or that consumers are more likely to find a special interest book calls for its removal or a different policy, opponents find.⁵⁴

Know your audience: it is a marketing staple, vital to knowing how and where to start in presenting your product. In this chapter I have discussed some of the market's most important characteristics: publishing statistics, genre popularity, general reading, buying and selling habits, and government influences. These help shape an image of what publishers are working with, concerning market dynamics as well as target audience. Having explored the playing field, I will move on to put this information into practice.

⁵² Van Velzen, 'Alle boeken in de bonus?'

⁵³ J. van der Leden, 'Verslag debat vaste boekenprijs: onmisbaar of onzinnig?', *Boekman*, 30 March 2015 <<https://www.boekman.nl/blog/verslag-debat-vaste-boekenprijs-onmisbaar-onzinnig>> (8 September 2016).

⁵⁴ IPA, 'Global Fixed Book Price Report'.

2 – Defining book marketing

“Marketing is the science and art of exploring, creating, and delivering value to satisfy the needs of a target market at a profit. Marketing identifies unfulfilled needs and desires. It defines, measures and quantifies the size of the identified market and the profit potential. It pinpoints which segments the company is capable of serving best and it designs and promotes the appropriate products and services.”⁵⁵

In the above citation, author of the classics in marketing management, Philip Kotler, defines ‘marketing’ as the identification and fulfilment of the target market’s needs and desires: something is created because it is missed and wanted. The meaning of marketing varies and determining a main definition for a broad term that can mean different things to different individuals and organisations continues to be a challenge. Digital innovation and the rise of social media have also been game changers, and opinions vary on whether these developments have made things easier or rather more complex. Despite its power in creating a ‘buzz’ around products, the impact of the digital environment has created challenges: existing business models are threatened, and while there is a larger focus on big data and customer insight, many businesses struggle to make a connection between the data and sales usage. Marketing managers are sometimes hesitant in relying on facts and data too much, as it might suppress creativity and thinking out-of-the-box. Moreover, the social influence on brands through the increased word-of-mouth (via social media) makes a brand more vulnerable: consumers can post negative evaluations online to anyone at all times.⁵⁶ In this chapter I discuss the main dynamics of marketing in general, and why these generic frameworks cannot be directly applied to the marketing of books. I will do this by exploring conceptual approaches to marketing by publishers.

The marketing principles Kotler proposes are generally applicable to any business intending to sell a product or service. For example, the classic marketing mix of the four Ps – product, price, place, promotion – is commonly employed. But in

⁵⁵ Kotler Marketing Group Inc, ‘Dr. Philip Kotler Answers Your Questions on Marketing’, <http://www.kotlermarketing.com/phil_questions.shtml> (6 June 2016).

⁵⁶ P.S.H. Leeftang, P.C. Verhoef, P. Dahlström and T. Freundt, ‘Challenges and solutions for marketing in a digital era’, *European Management Journal*, 32 (2014), pp. 5-6.

publishing's marketing these models do not always seamlessly move from theory into practice and are often presented with complex challenges. Kotler has devised a theoretical model of buyer behaviour, which displays the process of information searching, decision-making within an organisation, and reviewing. While this affects potential buyers, books and other reading material are commonly purchased under circumstances that are hardly considered and require a different approach. Consumer behaviour models are numerous and there is no generally accepted theory since each marketing subject holds a unique set of factors that should be taken into account, although they cannot always be controlled and strategies will still be based on predictions. Kotler refers to this as the consumer's black box, the unknown reasons behind certain buying behaviour: it is impossible to read minds and determine buyers' characteristics in combination with their personal decision process.

“Marketing stimuli consist of the Four Ps: product, price, place, and promotion. Other stimuli include major forces and events in the buyer's environment: economic, technological, political, and cultural. All these inputs enter the buyer's black box, where they are turned into a set of observable buyer responses: the buyer's brand and company relationship behaviour and what he or she buys, when, where, and how often. The marketer wants to understand how the stimuli are changed into responses inside the consumers black box, which has two parts. First, the buyer's characteristics influence how he or she perceives and reacts to the stimuli. Second, the buyer's decision process itself affects the buyer's behaviour. (...) We can measure the inputs to consumer buying decisions. (...) But it's very difficult to 'see' inside the consumer's head and figure out the whys of buying behaviour (that's why it's called the black box). Marketers spend a lot of time and dollars trying to figure out what makes customers tick.”⁵⁷

The environment in which consumers make a decision as well as their reaction to making the purchase is measurable and has influential power to some extent. The buying environment is affected by marketing stimuli through the four Ps, but also by economic, technological, social, and cultural factors. The buyers' response entails the buying attitudes and preferences, their behaviour when it comes to making the

⁵⁷ P. Kotler and G. Armstrong, *Principles of marketing* (Pearson Education, 2010), pp. 160-161.

purchase (what/when/where/how much), and their relationship with the brand and company. These are the visible and measurable aspects of buyer behaviour, sensitive to being shaped one way or another and thus promising focus points for marketing strategies. In attempting to analyse the black box, many models for the buying decision process have been designed by marketing scholars over the years. Typically, it is a five-stage model that consumers go through (sometimes stages are skipped or reversed): problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behaviour.⁵⁸ Understanding consumer behaviour at each stage is an important step in influencing it, and is something I will discuss further in relation to book marketing in the fourth chapter.

In the end, the foundation of marketing appears to lie in a profitable communication with customers, as Alison Baverstock argues: it comes down to effective selling and meeting customer needs profitably.⁵⁹ Kotler has also called this a transaction, in which values are exchanged between two or more parties.⁶⁰ This core idea of marketing came from decades ago, but the principles of communication and transactions remain relevant. In his guide to modern marketing, Harry Beckwith notes how successful companies have come to think different about marketing by being more service-based: these new marketers have shifted their focus from highlighting features and benefits to building relationships with customers.⁶¹ Because of its likely effect on the return rates of customers (creating loyalty), the establishment of this relation has come to be encouraged more. The (shaping of) the relation functions as an act of amplifying content, because it communicates content to readers and increases its exposure.

Marketing has had a growing position in publishing: not only because publishing has grown beyond the business of simply making something public by widely distributing it, but because the public has developed a familiarity with marketing techniques and being sold products as well. With so much competition, getting our attention has become increasingly difficult. The marketing department may not make the ultimate publishing decisions, but it does have a significant influence. Marketers will need sufficient information on a book and will be critics to editors, keeping in mind the

⁵⁸ P. Kotler and K.L. Keller, *Marketing Management* (Pearson Education Limited, 2012, 14e), pp. 188-195.

⁵⁹ Baverstock, *How to market books*, p. 5.

⁶⁰ P. Kotler, 'A generic concept of marketing', *Journal of Marketing*, 36.2 (1972), pp. 46-54.

⁶¹ H. Beckwith, *Selling the invisible: A field guide to modern marketing* (Hachette UK, 1999), p. 9.

question of ‘will it sell?’. They will not wait for editors to present the final product to them and show them what to work with; they are for example, also capable of carrying through changes to a cover or title (during the editing process) because it is not appealing enough or does not convey the book’s message clearly.⁶² Less straightforwardly, marketing already plays an inherent role in the editing department. When it comes to the shaping of a manuscript, books need to fit the publisher’s genre expertise and intended readership. Editors of thrillers will check that authors stay within the boundaries of the thriller, and not deviate towards thick descriptions and a deeper exploration of characters that will slow down its intended suspenseful atmosphere.⁶³

Successful Dutch thriller author Saskia Noort recently left her publisher of thirteen years and joined forces with Lebowski, a literary fiction publisher known for authors like Niccolò Ammaniti and Dave Eggers, to publish her first novel. Meanwhile she will have her upcoming thrillers published by The House of Books, a publisher that, aside from occasional novels and non-fiction books, mostly works with thrillers. Noort was happy to now be able to let go of the thriller framework with Lebowski: there she would be free of an audience expecting a thriller, and able to further explore certain themes and use more characters in her story.⁶⁴ A literary fiction publisher will not have the same tools a children’s book publisher has: the selection of a suitable publisher for a manuscript therefore needs to be a well-considered choice. At the same time, publishers will sometimes also pass over manuscripts that are promising but inappropriate for them to other publishers. Books have come to be regarded more as products with target audiences over the years, and it is common for publishers to work with a tailored plan in which a title is collectively examined and profiled by the editing, marketing, and sales departments.⁶⁵

So what is different about marketing books, compared to, for example, marketing a pair of shoes? You see is what you get: at buying the shoes, you will know they are the right fit and you like the way they look. As previously mentioned, books are experience

⁶² G. Davies and R. Balkwill, *The professionals’ guide to publishing: A practical introduction to working in the publishing industry* (Kogan Page Publishers, 2011), pp. 37-38.

⁶³ Nijsen, *ABC van de literaire uitgeverij*, p. 134.

⁶⁴ T. Jaeger, ‘Saskia Noort en Simone van der Vlugt vertrekken bij uitgeverij Ambo|Anthos’, *NRC*, 27 October 2016) <<https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2016/10/27/saskia-noort-vertrekt-bij-uitgeverij-amboanthos-a1528752>> (28 February 2017).

⁶⁵ Nijsen, *ABC van de literaire uitgeverij*, pp. 211-212.

goods: in most cases it is not until you have actually read them, that you will know whether you are happy with your purchase or not. As Alison Baverstock puts it in her guide *How to market books*:

“There are undeniable difficulties in conveying, in snack-sized gobbets barely capable of drawing a sufficient response to be useful, a sense of a product demanding such high levels of involvement and commitment. The public is also unpredictable. Will they really buy what they say they want, or not buy what they don’t currently understand?”⁶⁶

Additionally, the number of books published worldwide increases every year: what makes a book on baking cakes special compared to its countless predecessors? Books also compete with other forms of media: instead of buying the Lonely Planet guide, consumers can look for recommendations on the TripAdvisor website; a documentary on Michael Jackson can provide the same information a biography can, and so on. These are all barriers in selling a title and in overcoming them, it is vital to make a title stick out among the vast collection of books, films, online sources, and more. Multimedia competition reveals itself through the convergence of old and new media, but instead of new technologies erasing older ones, publishers (of any type of content) face a struggle for attention in our information economy. As content has increased, creating attention is now key in amplification: to draw consumers in through publicity, marketing and visibility.⁶⁷

In separating books from other sources of information and entertainment, marketers should keep in mind a basic question: why do people buy books? In building an effective marketing plan that plays into current trends, understanding what drives consumers is especially valuable. Not only our motives for buying (or borrowing) books, but the ways in which we like to experience books are changeable too, and thus important to involve in any analysis of book consuming. Technological changes and media convergence have for instance also stimulated a participatory culture, as we move from being passive consumers to taking an interactive position within the multimedia system. Companies have become participants besides individual consumers,

⁶⁶ Baverstock, *How to market books*, pp. 44-45.

⁶⁷ M. Bhaskar, *The content machine: Towards a theory of publishing from the printing press to the digital network* (Anthem Press, 2013), pp. 176-177.

and while some have more power than others, all are contributing to a conversation, a 'buzz' of which the value is increasing in the information/attention economy. As Henry Jenkins notes in his work *Convergence Culture*, "consumption has become a collective process".⁶⁸

The idea that books require a tailored marketing approach is stressed by Baverstock, who notes the fiction book characteristically is meant for leisure and not a life essential. It faces a lot of competition from other published material and media, and can additionally be replaced easily by very different products that will ultimately satisfy the same need for relaxation or a way to spend free time (e.g. a gym membership, drinks in a bar, a massage). Buying a book usually takes more time compared to other personal purchases, as it requires a consideration of many things like choosing a book from the wide array of titles in a store, deciding if the cover is appealing, reading the blurb, skimming through it. It is a more complex choice than buying a familiar newspaper you know from previous experiences is worth your money. Book purchases commonly also peak during holidays like Christmas or Mother's Day, and events like the Book Week, making specific time periods essential to book marketing and sales.⁶⁹ Books are thus a special leisure product that are also frequently gifted, in comparison to newspapers or a gym membership. Those who buy a book as a present also tend to purchase more books than planned when walking into a shop, a phenomenon marketing can play into.⁷⁰ Factors like these show how strongly diverse products make it difficult to find a core marketing definition and consequently difficult to develop a sales pitch that is tailored to each market.⁷¹

The arts in general have to deal with unique factors in marketing their products. Marketing professor François Colbert notes that a cultural enterprise reserves an important role for the artist, who usually works independently. The firm is concerned with the product of the artist's creative act and predominantly takes on the role of selling their work.⁷² This makes for a complicated balance between what the market desires and what the publisher thinks is a (culturally) worthy product when acquiring a

⁶⁸ H. Jenkins, *Convergence culture* (NYU Press, 2006), pp. 3-4.

⁶⁹ Baverstock, *How to market books*, p. 152.

⁷⁰ GfK, 'Rapportage boekenbranche meting 32: Customer Journey van het kopen van boeken', May 2015, <<http://files.nuv.nl/app/uploads/2015/08/18102355/Rapportage-boekenbranche-meting-32.pdf>> (8 September 2016).

⁷¹ Baverstock, *How to market books*, p. 152.

⁷² F. Colbert, 'The Arts Sector: A Marketing Definition', *Psychology & Marketing*, 31.8 (2014), p. 563.

title. A publisher, however, needs to make profit in order to survive: it has to be market-oriented foremost. Publishers try to fund risky specific interest books or highbrow literature with the profits made from bestsellers, to provide a varied range of books and to hold a certain reputation. This type of funding can be referred to as using internal subsidies.⁷³ For example, Uitgeverij Prometheus publishes a variety of famous Dutch literary writers like Connie Palmen, as well as foreign ones like Zadie Smith, but has also taken on international bestseller *50 Shades of Grey*. The publisher says to strive to presenting new and promising writers on the market, and frequently manages debutants.⁷⁴ Lebowski Publishers likes to maintain a balance of literary bestsellers (*The Girls* by Emma Cline, works by Niccolò Ammaniti and Dave Eggers) together with poetry and special interest (current affairs) titles on topics like the Arab Spring and planetary geology. Whether the average reader will be aware of the publisher's variety in publications (or the publisher for that matter) is doubtful. But because of its character as a cultural enterprise, a publisher may generally be more inclined to represent a prestigious selection of titles deemed worthy of publication. Publishers may try to make a profit from it if only to financially survive, either by also publishing popular mainstream works, or cutting back on staff or certain developmental stages like production. The balance of market orientation and cultural independence hence seems like something continuously at play within a publishing house.

Michael Bhaskar describes amplification, besides filtering ('the publisher as a gatekeeper') as a key publishing task in his book *The Content Machine*. Instead of perceiving publishing as a passive means of transit by which content can move from a single manuscript to a mass-produced book, publishing is an active process through which content is shaped and transformed to varying degrees.⁷⁵ Technological developments and accompanying innovative start-ups are sprouting up and freely move and adapt to the new environment. Bhaskar notes that in this regard the problem does not so much lie in our changed technologies, but is more central to the (digital) markets. A larger scale in combination with lower costs is an attractive perk in digital approaches compared to traditional publishing. But as the model changes and the value of ownership of content diminishes, this centralisation of content and audience betrays the fundamentals of publishing: filtering and amplification. Publishers struggle to compete

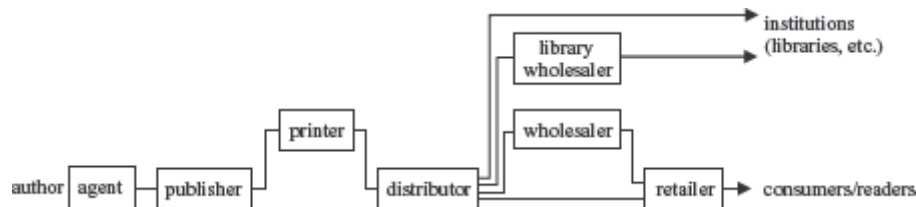
⁷³ Nijsen, *ABC van de literaire uitgeverij*, pp. 110-111.

⁷⁴ Uitgeverij Prometheus, 'Over ons', <<http://uitgeverijprometheus.nl/over-ons>> (8 September 2016).

⁷⁵ Bhaskar, *The content machine*, pp. 168-169.

with the business models of large online-based companies. While their strength is to add value through framing, the uniqueness of their ability to execute this process is becoming questionable as techniques are easier and more available for both creators and consumers. There is thus a growing need for new models that work with filtering and amplification.⁷⁶

What kind of role does marketing play in the business of publishing? Thompson describes the publisher as one player in a field, connected to other players that each contribute something of value to a common goal of producing, selling and distributing a book. He refers to it as a chain of activities: the ‘publishing chain’, which is both a ‘supply chain’ (each player provides a means to achieve the common goal) and a ‘value chain’ (each player adds value in the process of doing so).⁷⁷



5 The supply chain.⁷⁸

As illustrated in the figure above, the creation or supply of a book starts with the author. A manuscript will, in this case, be evaluated by an agent and sold to the publisher, but the publisher frequently will acquire titles on its own via the slush pile (unsolicited manuscripts sent directly to the publisher) or personal selection and networking. The link of agent is flexible for most Dutch publishers and, although literary agencies are useful and increasingly searched out by authors, they are no crucial player in the field.⁷⁹

The content created by an author has significant value that convinces the publisher to buy its rights. The publisher then will add to that value: through editing, reviewing and creating a fitting design (cover, illustrations, paper type, typesetting and other visual traits of a book) important decisions are made to help create the look of the end product. These are activities that, depending on the publisher, are either

⁷⁶ Bhaskar, *The content machine*, pp. 173-176.

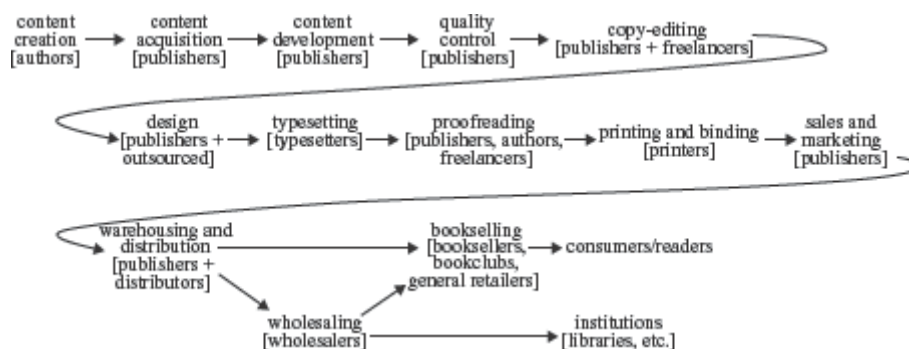
⁷⁷ Thompson, *Merchants of culture*, pp. 14-15.

⁷⁸ Thompson, *Merchants of culture*, p. 15.

⁷⁹ Nijsen, *ABC van de literaire uitgeverij*, pp. 21-22.

outsourced or performed by in-house staff. After perfecting the book's content and design, the publisher requires a printer to carry out its final decisions and physically bind and print the book in the desired number of copies. Through numerous activities, the original value of the original manuscript has now increased significantly. Afterwards, the books are delivered to a distributor that can provide copies for wholesalers, retailers and libraries or other institutions. Individual consumers do not buy from the distributor, but from the intermediary retailer. During the value creation process, a publisher's marketing department will devise a plan to advertise the book to stimulate sales and create additional value to attract readers.

Thompson notes that the publishing chain is no fixed model, but can change as certain activities or intermediaries are rendered unnecessary by economic and technological developments.



6 The value chain.⁸⁰

Those influences can affect any link in the publishing chain, and as discussed before, the meaning of marketing has also become complex with the coming of online platforms. Whether the function of marketing will always be occupied by the publisher is unsure, but the publisher's expertise in promotional activities goes further than simply presenting a book to the public; building a market and convincing people to buy your product is where the true challenge lies.⁸¹ Publishing is more than making possible a widespread distribution of text. Publishers have been called gatekeepers or middlemen, in deciding what content gets published and in what kind of form. Bhaskar argues we are in need of a theory of publishing, explaining what makes something 'public', how

⁸⁰ Thompson, *Merchants of culture*, p. 15.

⁸¹ Thompson, *Merchants of culture*, pp. 21-22.

publishing is an act of mediation and the creation of markets and content within this business. Since we perceive content differently after it has been published compared to its prior state, it shows a system at play that is more complex than generally assumed. Publishing's continuously changing tools of the trade, historically as well as geographically speaking, make it difficult to settle for a uniform idea of publishing. But despite the changeable contexts and production methods, Bhaskar highlights the two basic publishing activities of filtering and amplification.⁸² The acts of selecting content and making them accessible and appealing to an audience, may take on different forms, but fundamentally remain the same. A book is still a product, and a product will need to be brought under the attention of an audience: amplification is just as an essential part of publishing as filtering through the growing content supply is.

The roots of our motivation to experience textual content in the first place lie in our reading culture, and how much it is present and able to encourage us to read. The benefits publishers would enjoy from collectively stimulating this reading culture can seem too indirect for them to prioritize this promotion of reading in general, but on a long-term basis they are promising still, which is why I will discuss the significance of acculturation next. In this chapter I have discussed the meaning of (book) marketing, and the changing environment to which it needs to constantly adapt. Theoretical models drawn up by marketing professionals like Kotler are useful, but they often lack the necessary perspective and considerations that are relevant to the product or service in question. It is thus necessary to discuss models by publishing theorists like Bhaskar and Thompson as well, and put marketing in a publishing perspective. The focus on customer relationship management has grown, because it has become essential to pay attention to the consumer's characteristics and the aspects of their buying environment. Meanwhile, the publisher's key tasks of filtering and amplification are also relevant to its promotional activities as marketing adds value to a title, amplifying its attractiveness. The position of the marketing department grows: editors and marketing staff are working more closely together as marketers take note of the current markets and trends, and influence decisions made during the editing process. The marketing link in the publishing chain is becoming increasingly more independent, and as Thompson has noted: the structure of the chain can change through economic and technological developments. However, the publisher's role in marketing does not simply entail the

⁸² Bhaskar, *The content machine*, p. 6.

presentation of books, but includes the building of markets which is an expertise that they have developed well over the years.

3 – Promoting reading, borrowing, buying

Discovering buyer motivations through consumer research is all well and good, but it commonly only scratches the surface of why individuals *continue* to buy books in particular. This begs the question: as a marketer, will you solely focus on convincing the buyer, or consider the reader as well? They seem interchangeable: readers are book buyers. But while a book may sell, the purchase cannot guarantee it will be read. Selling a book is different from selling a drink like Coca Cola for which consumers will return to buy it again; aside from avid bibliophiles perhaps, consumers are unlikely to purchase the same book a second time. But publishers do hope they will return for different titles, so the difference with marketing other products lies in the fact that a publisher would prefer for consumers to buy any book rather than no book at all. Even if the book is published by a competitor, the purchase means a consumer is interested in reading and could come back to buy more books. Reading culture transcends corporate boundaries in the publishing industry.

For a publisher to invest in a marketing goal that seems secondary to directly selling books can seem unrewarding at first, but stimulating a buyer to (continue to) read is a long-term marketing strategy. When libraries succeed in connecting with readers and witness an increase in development and enjoyment of reading as a result of actively promoting services and - most importantly - the act of reading, why could this not stimulate *buying* books, aside from *borrowing* books, as well?⁸³ Encouraging the act of reading could add to the appeal of buying books in general, supporting future sales for any publisher (and retailer). It can also help relieve the pressure on heavily branding individual titles. It has been suggested that improving the reading environment in the home, the school, and the community at the same time, while improving the image of reading so it is less school-focused, are necessary efforts to create a culture for reading within a given society. Access to good quality national literature has also been called a basic principle in establishing and nurturing reading interests and habits. It has been stressed that readers need to be able to look beyond school-prescribed literature to

⁸³ In the National Year of Reading in the UK in 2008, librarians played a key role as ambassadors of reading and made a significant impact on the visibility of reading in communities. See: C. Rankin, 'The National Year of Reading: a case study of librarians as key partners in empowering communities and building a nation of readers', World Library and Information Congress: 18th IFLA General Conference and Assembly, 5 August 2012, <<http://eprints.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/764/1/108-rankin-en.pdf>> (28 February 2017), pp. 11-12.

develop a personal motivation to read.⁸⁴ In promoting reader development, several factors for success have been identified, among which are the availability of a variety of books and the discussing of books and reading experiences.⁸⁵ These are factors to which publishers can actively contribute in the marketing of different titles and by providing platforms (via social media for example) for discussion and engaging a community. As a nurtured, active reading culture supports the consuming of books in general, it is beneficial for publishers to contribute. In partnerships between different stakeholders in the book industry, skills are combined to encourage readers and develop reading habits. These serve the public as well as support a thriving industry. Studies have pointed out that, for example, people who borrow books from libraries are more likely to buy them than those who don't: thus co-promotion between partners from different sectors can increase the markets for both borrowing and buying.⁸⁶

The success rate for activities aimed at the stimulation of reader development depends on the readers' attitude. Why we read or not can be explained by Icek Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour, which argues that people's behavioural patterns are determined by three variables: attitudes, social norms, and observed behavioural control. People with a positive reading attitude will be more likely to enjoy reading and read more (and borrow/buy books more often) than those with a negative attitude. This attitude is shaped by previous reading experiences, and strongly influences the evaluation of a new experience. It is also a stable attitude that does not change overnight.⁸⁷ A high level of concentration, through intrinsic interest in a text, is an experience that leads to a positive reading attitude; this results in the flow, the feeling of losing track of time and place. Reading with the goal of getting into a particular mood (relaxed or excited), and experiencing various emotions by empathizing with fictional

⁸⁴ R. Doiron and M. Asselin, 'Promoting a culture for reading', *IFLA Journal*, 37.2 (2011), p. 111; M. Sanders-ten Holte, 'Creating an optimum reading culture in the low countries: The role of Stichting Lezen', 64th IFLA Conference (1998) <<http://archive.ifla.org/IV/ifla64/098-80e.htm>> (28 February 2017); L. Baker, M.J. Dreher, and J.T. Guthrie (eds.), *Engaging young readers: Promoting achievement and motivation* (Guilford Press, 2000).

⁸⁵ Stichting Lezen, 'Succesfactoren voor leesbevordering', 8 May 2013, <<http://www.leesmonitor.nu/succesfactoren-voor-leesbevordering>> (28 February 2017).

⁸⁶ S.T.B. Train, 'Promoting reading through partnerships: a ten-year literature overview', *New Library World*, 103.4/5 (2002), pp. 134, 139.

⁸⁷ C. Stalpers, *Het verhaal achter de lezer: Een empirisch onderzoek naar variabelen die verschillen in leesgedrag verklaren* (Uitgeverij Eburon, 2007), p. 15; I. Ajzen, *Attitudes, personality and behavior* (Open University Press, 1988).

characters are also positive influences on the affinity with reading.⁸⁸ Reading and feeling emotionally close to a text sets in motion the wheels of imagination as readers experience different stimulating senses via sight, touch and hearing, and are able to project themselves into a story and empathize on a level that creates a sense of *being* the character. A text can leave behind traces of memory, especially when readers experienced it in the before-mentioned ways. The positive experiences and remaining memories of experiences result in a positive attitude and the tendency to take pleasure in reading.⁸⁹

The attitude determines what the reader expects of reading, while social norms determine what other people think of someone reading. This concerns the influence of someone's surroundings, primarily that of parents, teachers, and friends. Children that grow up in homes with many books and parents that read to them will usually be better at reading and have pleasant associations with reading (and consequently have a more positive reading attitude), than those that hardly get in touch with books outside of school, for example. Social norms affect attitude as well, as the reader is self-conscious of what other people will think of him/her when he/she is reading. The third and last variable posed by Ajzen depends on reading ability. When people have struggled with reading in the past, they become less convinced of their skills and thus less motivated to continue reading, developing a negative attitude. Repeatedly struggling makes for low expectations, and low expectations result in regarding reading as a chore and avoiding books altogether. Reading behaviour is based on previous experiences.⁹⁰

Encouraging reading development leads to an increase of readers and an increase of sold and borrowed books. Not only is the acculturation to reading culture of economic importance, it has a significant role in the development of our society as well. Literature evidently is a characteristic of our intellectual and cultural development, and books can have an impact on millions of us, as Nicholas A. Basbanes writes on the power and social influence of literature:

⁸⁸ Stichting Lezen, 'Leesplezier stimuleren', <<http://www.leesmonitor.nu/leesplezier-stimuleren#leeservaringen>> (28 February 2017); S. Tellegen and J. Frankhuizen, *Waarom is lezen plezierig?* (Uitgeverij Eburon, 2002).

⁸⁹ Stichting Lezen, 'Leesplezier stimuleren'; Tellegen and Frankhuizen, *Waarom is lezen plezierig?*

⁹⁰ Stalpers, *Het verhaal achter de lezer*, pp. 17-19.

“That literature is fundamental to our cultural heritage and our shared patrimony is a given. The Greeks have their *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the Chinese their *Tao te Ching*, the Indians their *Mahabharata*, the Italians their *Divine Comedy*, the Spanish their *Don Quixote*, and each of these works is a literary masterpiece that is transcendent, every one an epic in the most fundamental sense of the word. Even among cultures that have not survived to our time, great works that helped define who these people were live on.”⁹¹

Libraries commonly stress the value of treasuring and offering access to this cultural heritage in their mission statements, and while publishers and booksellers are more sale-oriented, they share a common goal of inspiring people to become interested readers. The more these groups stimulate reading, the more people will be aware of books and the more they will hopefully buy, read, and buy again. Publishers in the Netherlands generally do not stand alone in promoting reading. Book trade organisations play an important role in the stimulation of the Dutch reading culture, as publishers, booksellers, and libraries work together to promote books and reading. National campaigns do not focus on one title in particular, but rather on books and reading in general. Publishers are however able to join these campaigns and seize the opportunity to present their titles (anew). The limited scale of the Dutch book market allows for this close-knit cooperation, and through it, there are ample cross-promotion opportunities. It is therefore vital for publishers to keep the importance of our reading acculturation in mind: instead of focusing on the book of the moment and who will buy it, considering the bigger picture could have a pay-off valuable to the industry on the whole. The Dutch publishing market has been called a growing collaborative economy that should continue to be nurtured in order to survive.⁹²

It usually is not in the publisher’s first interest to view its marketing strategies in regard of promoting a reading culture, but to invest more in the stimulation of reading is not necessarily a risk for a publisher’s business. In comparison to a publisher that is usually focused on the buyer, a library pays more attention to the reader: after purchasing a membership, the library’s goal to convince a buyer is already met. Yet

⁹¹ N.A. Basbanes, *Every book its reader: The power of the printed word to stir the world* (HarperCollins, 2005), pp. 12-13.

⁹² ‘Dutch publishing and collaboration: The Netherlands’ Wiet de Bruijn’, *Publishing Perspectives*, 11 August 2016, <<http://publishingperspectives.com/2016/08/dutch-publishing-markets-de-bruijn>> (28 February 2017).

libraries still invest in their relationship with members and try to contribute to our reading culture, to maintain a dynamic and attractive institution, and to encourage people to return to the library and eventually extend their memberships. Apart from CPNB reading campaigns, libraries participate in other (national) campaigns held by the association of public libraries (Vereniging van Openbare Bibliotheken, or VOB), aimed at presenting what titles are being offered, encouraging reading (and reading to children), but also at promoting the library as a cultural and educational centre. The annual e-book campaign, promoting the ease of borrowing e-books, has resulted in more people planning on borrowing e-books and even convinced non-members to get a library membership. These marketing activities by libraries indicate the importance of supporting acculturation for the sake of the book industry in general, besides promoting single titles. In regard of the promotion of reading and eventual book buying, publishers could benefit from adapting to libraries' policies.

Most national book and reading campaigns are organised by CPNB, of which the bulk share is financed with the budget provided by different trade organisations, and only partly by incidental government subsidies. CPNB campaigns like the Book Week (*Boekenweek*) are considerably better-known than promotional activities by individual publishers/bookshops/libraries. Individual titles however can gain better visibility through these, for example, by being highlighted during the Children's Book Week, or the Month of the Thriller. Other examples of collaboration are the organisation of book distribution by the Central Bookhouse (CB, the main logistical centre created and owned by publishers and booksellers) and publishers launching initiatives like the Renew the Book competition, in which start-ups were invited to come up with a new innovative book concept. As individual publishers usually lack the funds to invest in innovation, working together and combining knowledge and strengths is encouraged to support mutual goals.⁹³

Besides their cultural significance, books are also of social importance as they provide fertile ground for discussion that can aid education and individual growth. Discussion has expanded to social networks where it thrives, and enthusiasts are brought closer together, which sparks friendships. In that perspective, reading seems to have grown from solely being a solitary activity to a social one: relationships are formed through a shared consumption of stories and discussion. The exchanging of books, for

⁹³ 'Dutch publishing and collaboration: The Netherlands' Wiet de Bruijn'.

instance, is a way of increasing sociality and friendship as they can be tools in conversation and “provide readers with both an index of intimacy and with materials that may be deployed in creative acts of self-presentation”.⁹⁴ While critics have emphasized the supposed effects of dissociation by media in general, as the act of ‘receiving’ media is an individual experience, activities like listening to music, watching movies and reading books indirectly have a “community-forming function”.⁹⁵ With an increase in reader networks and communities in various forms, there is not only a larger potential book buying audience, publishers are also able to exploit a larger playing field in interacting with readers and marketing titles.

Despite common opinions on people reading fewer books in general, there appears to be an ongoing popularization of literary reading. For example, seeing a movie and reading a book frequently have become rather symbiotic activities instead of oppositional, as movie adaptations become increasingly popular, also fuelling sales of the original books and vice versa.⁹⁶ The rise of (online) book clubs and reading communities has contributed to this popularization of reading as well. Reading groups choose their book of the week partially based on how ripe for debate a title is and interested readers share a discussion from which a book’s popularity can further grow. That the level of ‘discussability’ is an important criterion for reading books “reveals just how tightly imbricated personal and social pleasures are within popular literary culture”, as Jim Collins puts in his book on the popularization phenomenon.⁹⁷ Breaking down barriers between authors and readers, and publishers and readers, bringing their communication to a more personal level, makes an intensified interaction and widespread marketing possible. At the same time, publishers can contribute to the acculturation of reading by investing in these communities. Collins notes how avid readers (but also music fans, gamers and others invested in any form of popular culture) have become more trusting of fellow-fans’ recommendations and less interested in selections made by ‘official’ critics or experts. Empowered by the access to new technologies, anyone passionate enough can assume the role of a ‘curator’, one

⁹⁴ I. Collinson, *Everyday readers: reading and popular culture* (Equinox, 2009), p. 57.

⁹⁵ R. Ayass and C. Gerhardt, *The appropriation of media in everyday life* (John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2012), p. 7.

⁹⁶ J. Collins, *Bring on the books for everybody: how literary culture became popular culture* (Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 7-8.

⁹⁷ Collins, *Bring on the books for everybody*, p. 44.

with excellent taste in books, music, movies, etc.⁹⁸ For a publisher to ignore the ‘reader’ (and to focus on just the ‘buyer’) or to lack the skills in persuading new readers, its marketing displays a significant flaw in general, long-term strategy. Collaboration with amateur critics can open doors to getting in touch with new readers, and in turn can contribute to a general acculturation of reading books.

Marketing for libraries commonly relies on cultural programming throughout which communities are created and linked. Collaborations between libraries and other ambassadors of the book via widespread national campaigns are of importance in promoting library services, but the development (or the reaching) of new and diverse audiences takes place on a smaller scale as well. Having identified the kind of audience the library desires to address, local cultural programming can be tailored to the audience’s relevant interests. The goal of reaching specific groups can help be achieved by the use of voices from the audience itself; this is where collaborations come in. These work best when voices are not only heard, but invited to actively join in planning and organising as well. Partnerships with groups and individuals from this group provide useful insights in the motivations of (potential new) members. Barriers to participating in the library can then be assessed and removed; these can be practical (inaccessibility, lack of time or understanding) as well as perceptual (lack of appeal).⁹⁹ One example of overcoming a practical barrier is a service of libraries delivering requested titles to members that are incapacitated in one way or another and unable to physically visit the library.¹⁰⁰ Partnerships with other organisations, media, local businesses, are only brought to full potential when they are involved in planning processes and have a stake in the outcomes. This can take on various forms, like seats on committee boards, focus groups or informal discussions with staff.¹⁰¹ These initiatives taken by libraries stress the value of collaboration with various groups and working together on a personal level. As publishers are equally able to employ certain interactive, cooperative methods in reading promotion and book marketing, it should be in their best interest to further develop this aspect of marketing.

⁹⁸ Collins, *Bring on the books for everybody*, pp. 45-46.

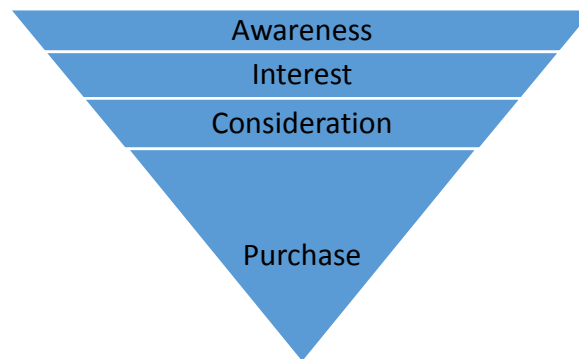
⁹⁹ D.A. Robertson, *Cultural programming for libraries: Linking libraries, communities, and culture* (American Library Association, 2005), pp. 24-26.

¹⁰⁰ Bibliotheek Voorschoten-Wassenaar, ‘Bibliotheek aan huis’ <<http://www.obvw.nl/speciaal-voor/bibliotheek-aan-huis.html>> (10 January 2017).

¹⁰¹ Robertson, *Cultural Programming for Libraries*, pp. 25-26.

In this chapter I discussed the special take publishers have on marketing: instead of focusing on individual titles, promoting books and reading in general is beneficial in the long run. Libraries do well in promoting reading to stimulate borrowing books, so why should this not work for buying books as well? Publishers miss the physical link to their readers the way libraries share one with members, but they are just as capable of collaborating with other parties. Input drawn from these outer sources can help in the previously mentioned identification of barriers or new audiences. Reading has become a shared experience, and book marketing can be further advanced through this relationship in which readers are heard as well as included, which I will continue to explore in the next chapter discussing the stages consumers go through in buying books.

4 – The consumer decision journey



7 An example of a purchase funnel model

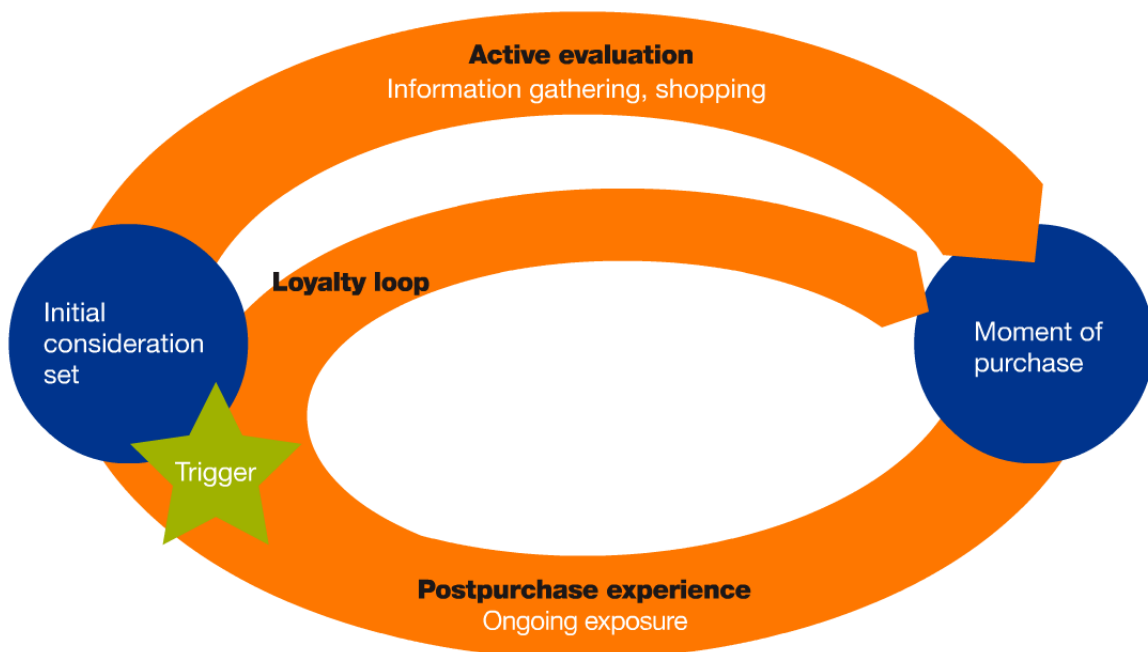
When we plan on buying a book, we generally go through a few influential stages in which we basically consider potential titles (pre-purchase), take action, and experience the product (post-purchase). This pattern has been called different names such as the purchase journey, customer journey, or the consumer decision journey.¹⁰² Traditionally, it was perceived as a funnel (see figure 7) in which awareness, interest, desire, and action successively lead to a customer's final choice. The funnel metaphor poses that consumers start out with multiple potential brands, which they put through an extensive evaluation process, reducing the number of brands until they reach a decision on one brand. But with the changes in consumers' interaction with brands, it has been argued that this model is dated. After widespread research on purchase decisions, an article in the *McKinsey Quarterly* (2009) posed the following:

“But today, the funnel concept fails to capture all the touch points and key buying factors resulting from the explosion of product choices and digital channels, coupled with the emergence of an increasingly discerning, well-informed consumer. A more sophisticated approach is required to help marketers navigate this environment, which is less linear and more complicated than the funnel suggests. We call this approach the consumer decision journey. Our thinking is

¹⁰² A. Richardson, 'Using customer journey maps to improve customer experience', *Harvard Business Review*, 10 November 2010, <<https://hbr.org/2010/11/using-customer-journey-maps-to>> (28 February 2017); D. Court, D. Elzinga, S. Mulder and O.J. Vetvik, 'The consumer decision journey', *McKinsey Quarterly*, June 2009, <<http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/the-consumer-decision-journey>> (8 September 2016); T. Powers et al, 'Digital and social media in the purchase decision', *Journal of Advertising Research*, 52.4 (2012), pp. 479-489.

applicable to any geographic market that has different kinds of media, Internet access, and wide product choice, including big cities in emerging markets such as China and India.”¹⁰³

Different from the funnel, this new model is better suited to today's consumer environment as it takes more aspects of consumers' experience into account. The consumer decision journey model is a circular journey (see figure 8). Whereas the funnel ends with the purchase, the consumer decision journey involves the post-purchase experience as an essential stage: the consumer will build expectations based on the experience, to inform the next purchase decision. The ongoing exposure can trigger a so-called loyalty loop, which drives consumers to be inclined to purchase the same brand again.¹⁰⁴ McKinsey found that as consumers become better at selecting information relevant to them, consumer-driven marketing becomes increasingly important: while one-third of the touch-points during the evaluation period was company-driven (e.g. traditional advertising), two-third was consumer-driven (e.g. online reviews, word-of-mouth recommendations).¹⁰⁵



8 McKinsey's consumer decision journey model

¹⁰³ Court, Elzinga, Mulder and Vetvik, 'The consumer decision journey'.

¹⁰⁴ Court, Elzinga, Mulder and Vetvik, 'The consumer decision journey'.

¹⁰⁵ Court, Elzinga, Mulder and Vetvik, 'The consumer decision journey'.

Marketing guru Seth Godin discusses this divide in his argument that discourages the traditional, direct marketing and instead recommends methods involving the participation and awareness of consumers. He refers to the 'old way' as Interruption Marketing: cold-calling, direct mail and TV commercials all interrupt our daily life with unsolicited messages, trying to hold our attention amidst the growing 'media clutter', while consumers principally see them as a waste of time. Instead, Godin proposes encouraging consumers to participate in campaigns, in which they are in some way rewarded. He dubs this Permission Marketing: consumers actively choose to be part of a campaign. Whereas Interruption Marketing is all about the moment of catching someone's attention, Permission Marketing has a long-term view and revolves around a process of attracting loyalty: it is anticipative (consumers look forward to it), personal (consumers can relate to it) and relevant (consumers are interested). This approach can also use the media clutter to a company's advantage, instead of drowning in it. According to Godin: "A book publisher that uses Interruption Marketing sells children's books by shipping them to bookstores, hoping that the right audience will stumble across them. A Permission Marketer builds book clubs at every school in the country."¹⁰⁶ In the following analysis I will discuss the possibilities and noted effects of promotional activities and the use of different media during a customer's purchase journey.

4.1 – Initial considerations

Deciding on a title is one thing, whether it will be a book at all is quite another. In the initial stage, consumers are exposed to various options that can satisfy their needs, be it for information or leisure purposes. Publishers and booksellers are confronted with fierce competition in attracting consumers, and it demands an approach conscious of this problem to rise above other options like the documentary telling the same story or the video game offering similar enjoyment/relaxation. Meanwhile, the growing supply of book titles continues to overwhelm.

¹⁰⁶ S. Godin, *Permission marketing: Turning strangers into friends, and friends into customers* (Simon and Schuster, 2012).

What influences us during this initial stage? McKinsey's model describes it as a period in which we put together an initial consideration set based on brand perceptions and exposure to recent touch points. Since consumers face an abundance of relevant choices, they tend to consider those brands they are familiar with first: brands in this consideration set have a larger chance at being purchased than other, new brands. Less established brands, like debut authors, would in this scenario suffer as known writers and series are the only brands capable of keeping head above water. Exclusion from the initial consideration set however does not have to be as harmful as it may sound: as consumers enter the evaluation phase, their number of brands to choose from is likely to increase as they actively search for information (see 4.2).¹⁰⁷ According to Kotler and Keller, branding is endowing products and services with the power of a brand. Brands have come to play a pivotal role in marketing products, as their ability to simplify decision making, and reduce the risk of buying something that can cause regret later on, is now invaluable in the complicated and busy lives of consumers today.¹⁰⁸

People generally do not favour particular publishers or are even aware of which ones published their favourite books.¹⁰⁹ Sometimes publishers accumulate media attention over controversial company decisions in regards to public figures and well-known authors. For example, Simon & Schuster was met with hard criticism upon the news of the publisher's plan to release a book by a prominent member of the far right movement, most recently known for his hateful and racist comments on Twitter.¹¹⁰ In The Netherlands something similar occurred when political activist Abou Jahjah signed a book deal with De Bezige Bij: a publisher - that was founded during World War II and has resistance roots - supporting the extremist views Jahjah proclaimed was news not well received and led to the departures of several authors from the renowned publishing house.¹¹¹ But aside from the occasional controversy, publishers are hardly talked about in mainstream media. Unlike businesses such as Disney and Pixar that do represent a strong brand, publishers generally stay in the background and push forward their authors as representatives instead; buyers are more likely to request 'the newest

¹⁰⁷ Court, Elzinga, Mulder and Vetvik, 'The consumer decision journey'.

¹⁰⁸ Kotler and Keller, *Marketing Management*, pp. 264-265: 'marketing management'.

¹⁰⁹ Nijssen, *ABC van de literaire uitgeverij*, p. 89: 'fondsvorming'.

¹¹⁰ The Guardian, 'Simon & Schuster stands by Milo Yiannopoulos book despite backlash', *The Guardian*, 30 December 2016, <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/dec/30/milo-yiannopoulos-book-deal-simon-schuster-dangerous-outcry>> (10 January 2017).

¹¹¹ M. Fogteloo, 'De bijenkoningin eet haar kinderen op', *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 6 April 2016, <<https://www.groene.nl/artikel/de-bijenkoningin-eet-haar-kinderen-op>> (10 January 2017).

Stephen King' than 'the newest HarperCollins'. Few publishers come to mind when we think of them brand-wise instead of considering particular titles and authors involved. Harlequin (part of HarperCollins) is an example of a model in publishing especially known for the specific type of books it represents: short romance novels aimed at women. Penguin comes close in terms of their classic pocket books, but the pocket has become widespread publishing practice decades ago, and classic novels are not 'owned' by Penguin nor are they the only focus the publisher has.

Dutch young adult publisher Blossom Books stands out in regard of branding compared to other publishers' efforts. The publisher has been working hard on its own brand establishment through various channels and by having additional output besides its publications like their merchandise in the shape of stationary, mugs, bags, etc. Blossom Books thinks of these products as promotional material for a reading lifestyle.¹¹² The publisher stands out in its collaboration efforts with bloggers and so-called ambassadors, readers that are invited to share promotion ideas, voice opinions on potential cover images, and receive unpublished manuscripts and various discounts. These privileges are granted in exchange for online reviews, promoting books among personal circles of friends and family, helping out at events, and similar promotional activities. Social media is also heavily used in connecting with readers, as Blossom Books strives to be approachable via many different platforms. The publisher's website itself is also regarded as a platform where readers can express their opinions, find information and get in touch with the people behind the books. Besides these online efforts, Blossom Books releases a magazine that contains interviews, book fragments, quizzes and writing advice.¹¹³ This type of collaboration reminds of the library approach in its involvement of readers in the process of publishing and marketing a book. Blossom Books therefore shows strength not only in its brand representation, but also in its close contact with readers.

More typically, brands are built on authors. Through brand marketing, a publisher can create continuous income. Author brands are especially influential as readers will be inclined to look into an author's entire oeuvre once they get hooked on them, thus popularizing older titles as well as new releases.¹¹⁴ Authors are also

¹¹² Blossom Books, 'Over ons', <<http://www.blossombooks.nl/over-ons>> (14 January 2017).

¹¹³ Blossom Books, 'Over ons'.

¹¹⁴ A. Lieberman and P. Esgate, *The definitive guide to entertainment marketing: Bringing the moguls, the media, and the magic to the world* (FT Press, 2013), p. 164.

increasingly involved in marketing, and publishers rely on them to give interviews, show up at events, actively use Twitter or update their personal website/blog. This does not only happen through the newfound business policy of publishers to guide authors in self-promotion, as self-published writers are equally capable of building a following. This again can raise awareness of the popularity of a certain writer's work, and help publishers discover content worthy of acquisition.¹¹⁵ Stephen King is an exemplary strong author/brand, whose horror and suspense novels have frequently been adapted for movies. The author has a large following of loyal readers that will buy new releases with little to no knowledge in advance, basing their motivations solely on the fact that "it's a Stephen King novel". King confirmed the power of his brand when he published a number of books under a pseudonym (Richard Bachman) and discovered these books did not sell well at all. Once his secret was uncovered and it became clear to the public King wrote them, the Bachman books sales rose tenfold.¹¹⁶

When a deceased author has a significant, strong image, publishers do not shy away from publishing their work posthumously: despite the missing marketing possibilities, an internationally famous brand like Tolkien will sell itself.¹¹⁷ Five years after his death, an unfinished story by Harry Mulisch – perhaps the most well-known author in the Netherlands – was published. Mulisch had struggled with his manuscript *De ontdekking van Moskou*, editing and rewriting for many years but never finishing it. The publication featured notes and essays to complement the story and it was marketed as a book in which the reader could feel close to the author by experiencing his mindset in reading a manuscript that was revised countless times but never good enough. Readers were also invited to use their imagination for the book's ending.¹¹⁸ For a book that was mostly negatively reviewed, Mulisch' latest received much exposure.¹¹⁹ Although

¹¹⁵ Baverstock, *How to market books*, p. 283.

¹¹⁶ R. Wood, 'Why you need to brand yourself as an author, and exactly how to do it', *Standout Books*, 6 April 2016, <<https://www.standoutbooks.com/author-branding>> (28 February 2017).

¹¹⁷ Many of Tolkiens manuscripts and other notes were edited and published after his death. Most notably: *The Silmarillion*. See: A. Singh, 'Tolkien book is posthumous bestseller', *The Telegraph*, 5 May 2009, <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/booknews/5278837/Tolkien-book-is-posthumous-best-seller.html>> (19 April 2017).

¹¹⁸ De Bezige Bij, 'De ontdekking van Moskou', <<http://www.debezigebij.nl/boeken/de-ontdekking-van-moskou>> (19 April 2017).

¹¹⁹ Among reviews were those by well-read, qualitative newspapers, such as: A. Peters, 'Mulisch' nieuwste roman is een onmogelijk boek', *De Volkskrant*, 29 October 2015, <<http://www.volkskrant.nl/recensies/mulisch-nieuwste-roman-is-een-onmogelijk-boek~a4173792/>> (19 April 2017); A. Storm, 'Mulisch pakt lezer snel in met postume "spookroman"', *Het Parool*, 29 October 2015, <<http://www.parool.nl/recensies/mulisch-pakt-lezer-snel-in-met-postume-spookroman~a4173626/>> (19 April 2017).

additional and multi-faceted promotion is desirable, a well-established brand is able to independently garner consumer attention.

Debut authors then seem even more difficult and risky to sell to an audience relying on brands, which is why publishers tend to “stick to a winning formula”.¹²⁰ But taking a chance on a debut can turn out to be an extraordinary one (*The Girl on the Train* by Paula Hawkins, or *Het Smelt* by Lize Spit), as Laura Parsons, commissioning editor at Legend Press and Paperbooks stresses:

“Imagine if the same marketing and publicity budget that was allocated to a bestselling author’s fifteenth novel were applied to an unknown name. A nobody with a big talent.”¹²¹

Brands are intangible assets that add value to a name, and as they are more likely to be included in the initial consideration set of consumers, titles attached to popular brands relatively have a bigger chance at selling well. Developing a brand is therefore a worthy investment, and it certainly helps, but it does not have to be a critical precondition for a book to sell, as I will discuss next.

4.2 – Active evaluation

Although the initially considered brands seem to be at an advance in the first phase of the consumer decision journey, during the second phase of active evaluation consumers actually tend to increase rather than narrow their number of brands under consideration. By orientating and searching for information, consumers come across more alternatives that will compete with the first set of brands and can eliminate an initial first choice.¹²²

2017); A. Fortuin, “Grootste, laatste grap” Mulisch doet beroep op uithoudingsvermogen lezer’, *NRC*, 30 October 2015, <<https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2015/10/30/het-droste-droste-en-droste-effect-1551040-a1244228>> (19 April 2017).

¹²⁰ ‘When acquiring debut authors, ask if they can compete’, *Publishing Perspectives*, 24 September 2015. <<http://publishingperspectives.com/2015/09/when-acquiring-debut-authors-ask-if-they-can-compete>> (28 February 2017).

¹²¹ ‘When acquiring debut authors, ask if they can compete’, *Publishing Perspectives*, 24 September 2015, <<http://publishingperspectives.com/2015/09/when-acquiring-debut-authors-ask-if-they-can-compete>> (28 February 2017).

¹²² Court, Elzinga, Mulder and Vetvik, ‘The consumer decision journey’.

Friends, co-workers, family and/or acquaintances are the most important source of information about books, although their influence appears to be decreasing. Other sources of influence (e.g. reviews, social media, bookshop staff) however, are weakening similarly.¹²³ From this could be concluded that the overall awareness of available books is declining, and that current methods in marketing titles are not up to the mark, and need updating. One example that corresponds to this belief presents itself in the significant drop in familiarity with (national) promotional campaigns for books/reading. For instance, in 2014, 65% of people said to be acquainted with the Book Week (the most prominent Dutch campaign); in 2015, this had decreased to 54%.¹²⁴

From staff recommendations to smart product placement, both physical and online shops can guide customers in their buying decision. Half of the people planning to buy a book however, have already decided on a title prior to visiting a shop.¹²⁵ Hence stores are not the only important factor of influence in connecting a book to the right audience; other external factors that potential buyers come into contact with before entering a store, in which the publisher can take part, are just as powerful. The online presence of a book starts off early through the publisher's use of metadata, or as Bhaskar calls it "a work's first online sales pitch".¹²⁶ By communicating good metadata (basic information on a book's title, author, genre, keywords etc.), a book gains visibility, which does not necessarily mean it will sell well, but online visibility has become vital in today's digital age. Without metadata, a book is untraceable and sales will almost certainly fail.

Our receptivity to online/social media is for a large part owed to our degree of appropriation of it in everyday life: media undergoes 'everydayification', as a new medium eventually becomes so commonly used it is omnipresent (the television can be found in any modern household with rare exceptions).¹²⁷ The increasing use of new media also causes a 'boundary dissolution' of media, which can be understood from multiple angles. Firstly, we have become accustomed to media because it is available to us at any time (temporal boundary dissolution). Secondly, with the arrival of a new

¹²³ GfK, 'Rapportage boekenbranche meting 33', July 2015, <<http://productie-admin.nuv.nl/app/uploads/2016/03/Boekenbranche-conceptrapportage-meting-33-2e-reguliere-meting-2015-1.pdf>> (7 June 2016).

¹²⁴ GfK, 'Rapportage boekenbranche meting 33'.

¹²⁵ GfK, 'Rapportage boekenbranche meting 32'.

¹²⁶ Bhaskar, *The content machine*, p. 177.

¹²⁷ The term 'everydayification' is used in: Ayass and Gerhardt, *The appropriation of media in everyday life*, pp. 3-5.

medium, the unity of space and medium is diminished as for example the computer moves from the desktop to a portable laptop or the phone becomes wireless and loses its secure place (spatial boundary dissolution). Lastly, media have come to affect us in all areas of our lives, not just in work but also in our hobbies. They take on tasks not initially assigned to them, like using your phone as an alarm clock, as technologies develop in unexpected ways (social boundary dissolution). Medium devices also grow smaller and more mobile, making it easier for people to physically take them anywhere they go, and continue to use them anyplace, anytime.¹²⁸ This incorporation of media into our daily activities has simultaneously increased our online activities. The Netherlands is currently one of the biggest social media and internet users in Europe (and the world); digital tools were welcomed in their early stages, and incorporated into daily life faster compared to many other countries.¹²⁹ The use of social media is also typically combined with the use of other media activities, like online gaming or watching television.¹³⁰ The extent to which people are online nowadays can make consumers more receptive to the influence of businesses broadcasting via social media. This 'vulnerability' is thus essential in the evaluation phase.

It has become common for authors to present and promote their own books as well as their image, a task that was traditionally a publisher's responsibility. With digital developments, this is done with relative ease. Authors are able to establish a close and valuable relationship with their readers; contacting an author is often quick and easy via Twitter and/or Facebook. Author-branding and other strategies in which stakeholders combine their powers (cross-promotion through collaborations with booksellers, for example) have become increasingly essential for publishers in presenting their products to the public. Playing into the mass online activity, the focus on the publisher's online presence has also grown. The personal approach may come more easily to authors, which is encouraged by publishers: authors have become the representing brand more and more, while the publisher's image, credibility, and reputation seems to become less meaningful.

An online presence is vital nowadays: anyone considering any kind of involvement with a business or product (whether it is to buy for you, work for you, or start any other kind of relationship), will first gather information online before taking

¹²⁸ Ayass and Gerhardt, *The appropriation of media in everyday life*, pp. 3-5.

¹²⁹ N. Sonck and J. de Haan, 'Media: Tijd in beeld', *Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau* (2015), p. 59.

¹³⁰ Sonck and De Haan, 'Media: Tijd in beeld', p. 81.

further action.¹³¹ Baverstock underlines the preference people have to trust people they know on organisation and/or product information, and that online marketing can imitate this sense of personal connection and build trust because of “the ability to start a conversation with your customers, to manage and develop a two-way communication and create confidence, offering a place where your customers can return, feel listened to and reassured”. These communities that come into existence are interdependent, as consumers begin to rely on the availability and diversity of information online, and organisations can gather information on the target audience, acquire big data for further market research and development and so on.¹³² Whereas an ‘audience’ is passive, a ‘community’ is active, and since it is in a publisher’s interest to grow a larger audience, they can use communities as a tool for engagement that increases the audience size.¹³³

Maintaining an online presence can be a job on its own: while smaller organisations may face fewer barriers in decision-making, larger organisations can afford putting together teams that solely take on the task of corporate online and social media management. For example Overamstel Uitgevers, a publishing concern housing various imprints with focuses ranging from literary fiction and children’s books to sports biographies and cookbooks, commissioned a ‘social lab’ that maintained the social media activity for all imprints, keeping a close connection with the (online) marketing department but acting semi-independently on the interpretation of social media content by observing the development of titles and related events, uploading videos of book presentations, announcing competitions, and the like.

Despite publishers having the qualifications and resources to create engaging communities online, because they have specialized in editing and producing content, authors can be in a better position to do so. As digital publisher Susan Danziger says on building successful communities: “Authors can create premiere content that is naturally focused; have a driving personality that can generate interest; and – depending on their own schedules – may have more time to devote to nurturing their communities.”¹³⁴ She also argues that the establishment of successful communities relies on principles that encourage growth and continued participation. Among these, most importantly, are:

¹³¹ Baverstock, *How to market books*, p. 206.

¹³² Baverstock, *How to market books*, p. 207.

¹³³ Danziger, ‘Discovering digital communities’, p. 111

¹³⁴ Danziger, ‘Discovering digital communities’, p. 111.

putting the audience first (to inspire loyalty), being authentic (to build trust), and the acknowledgment of readers' contributions (to monitor and engage readers in conversation).¹³⁵ An author thus generally has a stronger brand than a publisher does. Authors can present themselves personally and approachable via Twitter and Facebook, but also by involving themselves in existing reading communities, acting as participants alongside everyone else on platforms like Goodreads. Besides being available for direct questions from readers, authors personally engage in conversation, showcase what they read themselves and post book reviews.

People with shared interests sort themselves into virtual communities with ease thanks to the personalisation possibilities of online profiles.¹³⁶ And in a bubble of like-minded people, discussions between thousands of readers are easily shaped.¹³⁷ This way, personalised media replaces traditional mainstream media and consumers have started to take ownership of the information culture surrounding a product.¹³⁸ As Andrew Keen argues in his book *The cult of the amateur*, on the growing power of the consumer versus traditional media: "We have grown more suspicious of marketers, advertising, traditional media... and more trusting of other consumers."¹³⁹ And rather than a traditional, faceless business mingling with individual readers, an author can naturally and more seamlessly enter a community like this and comes across as genuine through their personal contributions. Brand-cultivating processes (design and production, and customer relationship management or CRM) are weighed more heavily in today's marketing: the value of brand equity grows.¹⁴⁰ Brand equity is the added value given to products and services, which is reflected in how consumers view and experience the brand, as well as in the price, market share and profitability.¹⁴¹ "To harness the value of communities formed around brands", as Bhaskar says, is especially now of great significance, as consumers are becoming increasingly dependent on community-born conversation.¹⁴²

¹³⁵ Danziger, 'Discovering digital communities', pp. 113-114.

¹³⁶ C.R. Sunstein, *Infotopia* (Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 97.

¹³⁷ Mangold and Faulds, 'Social media', p. 361.

¹³⁸ A. Keen, *The cult of the amateur: How today's internet is killing our culture* (Crown Publishing Group, 2007), p. 7.

¹³⁹ Keen, *The cult of the amateur*, pp. 88-89.

¹⁴⁰ Bhaskar, *The content machine*, p. 177.

¹⁴¹ Kotler and Keller, *Marketing management*, pp. 265-266.

¹⁴² Bhaskar, *The content machine*, p. 177.

Now more than ever, publishers can play into this dependency by recognizing and utilizing the level of discussability of their books. In chapter 3 I referred to how this attribute is a popular criterion in choosing a book: being able to talk about it with others adds value to a story because readers introduce it into their personal lives. These discussions are shaped by a particular standard or infrastructure, also called a 'reading formation': this term is borrowed from Tony Bennett by Collins in his argument on the organisations in which book discussions take place. He argues these are more than communities of like-minded readers that have coincidentally found each other and are interested in the same things. It is "not just an audience or a community but a set of interconnections in which the desire for a certain kind of reading pleasure becomes hardwired into a literary culture."¹⁴³ Readers come to interpret and discuss books within a certain framework. With technological developments and the rise of 'amateur critics' (or the earlier mentioned 'curators' in chapter 3), it has become easier for readers to become part of these extended communities. Now that the threshold has been lowered, publishers and authors can easily join in, and are invited to connect with readers on the personal level made possible by the discussability of books and the extended platform available for it. The boundaries of the roles of author, publisher, and reader have started to fade away as the playing field has broadened and participatory culture grows.

The settling of new, digital media into our everyday lives has contributed to our ability to research and connect. Our consideration set grows beyond the initial set of choices during the active evaluation phase, as we search out our potential purchases and stumble upon other options. Through the power of communities, those options can become more attractive: a book can have a sizeable online presence, to which readers themselves add. Consumers have slowly come to take ownership of the information culture, but publishers and especially authors are able to connect with readers and act within these circles.

¹⁴³ Collins, *Bring on the books for everybody*, pp.44-45; T. Bennett, 'Texts in history: The determinations of readings and their texts', *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, 18.1 (1985), p.7: "By a reading formation, I mean a set of discursive and intertextual determinations that organize and animate the practice of reading, connecting texts and readers in specific relations to one another by constituting readers a reading subjects of particular types and texts as objects-to-be-read in particular ways."

4.3 – Moment of purchase

Because of their dependence on retailers, the moment of purchase is perhaps the most difficult stage in the consumer decision journey for publishers to make a difference. The Dutch Publishers Association (*Nederlands Uitgeversverbond*, or NUV) keeps track of consumers' behaviour, regularly reporting on how we buy, read and borrow books. The extracted data can inform publishers to some extent. Reports also analyse the effects of particular events, such as the annual Book Week, which aims to encourage people to read and highlight the role of the book in society. Events like these are typically exploited by stores in the hope of attracting buyers. In 2016, NUV research showed that consumers increasingly enter physical bookshops spontaneously, hoping to be inspired and surprised by what they find there. Online shops are usually used in the case a consumer already has an idea of the kind of purchase, but this does not necessarily mean consumers cannot be swayed in their ultimate decision. Suggestive tactics need to be tailored in a more sophisticated way during the buying process than is done in physical stores, for example by highlighting quotes from positive user reviews and suggesting a different title when starting payment. Algorithms can support these suggestions to predict which titles are interesting to someone based on their searching- and buying behaviour.¹⁴⁴

The dependence on retailers is unfortunate for publishers, but their influence on ultimate consumer decisions is not completely limited. It is for instance not unusual for publishers to provide stores with point-of-sale material like posters. There are also plenty of opportunities for collaboration, for example by inviting authors to do a book tour in which they visit shops and give a talk or hold a signing session. Still, small and independent publishers can perhaps exert more influence during this phase, since they are more inclined to use and benefit from direct-to-consumer programs. Selling to consumers without a mediating channel is not only beneficial towards revenue: it develops a customer relationship.¹⁴⁵ In the traditional arrangement, retailers retain their information on who buys what. By taking control of sales channels, publishers are

¹⁴⁴ GfK, 'Rapportage boekenbranche meting 35', January 2016, <<http://productie-admin.nuv.nl/app/uploads/2016/09/Rapportage-boekenbranche-meting-35.pdf>> (28 February 2017).

¹⁴⁵ M. Izenwasser, 'Why all publishers can and should go direct-to-consumer', *Digital Book World*, 2 February 2015, <<http://www.digitalbookworld.com/2015/why-all-publishers-can-and-should-go-direct-to-consumer>> (28 February 2017).

able to collect specific sales data and see where they can make use of trends and influence these.¹⁴⁶ Dutch publishers are able to view how many copies are ordered by individual stores via data provided by national distributor Centraal Boekhuis (CB), but do not have access to data from individual retailers. Further information on the type of buyer a title attracts, and whether the ordered copies are sold quickly or are collecting dust for a few months before being returned to the publisher, is unavailable to them. Of course frequent book orders and incoming sales are telling. Sometimes a book sells well in a particular area (for example, a book on ice skating may sell better in the northern provinces) which is of interest to targeted marketing plans. Nevertheless, the lack of detailed overview is a bit of a blind spot.

Distributor data is strictly accessible to publishers only, although authors are generally welcome to inform about developments. Because of frequent inquiries about their sales, publisher Atlas Contact launched a pilot programme in 2017 that gives authors a personal login code to CB Analytics, the national distributor's online data platform especially for publishers and booksellers.¹⁴⁷ It is a helpful gesture toward authors, and it gives them some degree of transparency about the impact of their public appearances as a particular shop may place a large order of a certain book following a signing session there. This programme therefore does not only strengthen the bond between publisher and author, but has potential for the bond with readers as well, as authors generate an awareness of their personal influence and may be more likely to act on this.

The evaluation phase is crucial now that consumers have become significantly adept at shopping, and influencing a choice that is usually set in stone at this stage is difficult. As every commercial business does, the book industry also faces the so-called 'research shopper phenomenon'.¹⁴⁸ This refers to the current multichannel customer behaviour: more than often people use the Internet for research, but visit a physical shop for the actual purchase. The same happens between online channels as one platform is more suited for researching and another for buying. In a thorough analysis, Peter C. Verhoef et al diagnose the motives consumers have for research shopping and

¹⁴⁶ E. Harvey, 'Why bookselling is now a relationships game', *Book Business*, 15 September 2015, <<http://www.bookbusinessmag.com/article/bookselling-now-relationships-game>> (28 February 2017).

¹⁴⁷ M. Dessing, 'Atlas Contact laat schrijvers zelf verkoop volgen', *Boekblad*, 3 February 2017, <<https://boekblad.nl/Nieuws/Item/atlas-contact-laet-schrijvers-zelf-verkoop-volgen>> (27 February 2017).

¹⁴⁸ P.C. Verhoef, S.A. Neslin and B. Vroomen, 'Multichannel customer management: Understanding the research-shopper phenomenon', *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 24 (2007), pp. 129-148.

how the phenomenon can be increased or decreased. Shoppers decide on where to research and buy based on the attributes of a channel or platform, and when this channel fails to get approval for the combination of these two actions, it means there is a lack of 'channel lock-in'. Shoppers use a channel for information searching, but when the purchase process is bothersome or the prices are higher in comparison to a different channel, an excellent information service alone will not hold their attention or 'lock' them in. They are also inclined to use multiple channels because it enhances the shopping experience, not just because it serves economic benefits (looking up prices online leads to better informed choices) but also because finding good deals sparks 'smart shopper feelings' and boosts a higher self-image.¹⁴⁹ Baverstock points out that the development of consumers wanting to be an active part of the buying process rather than simply purchasing what is on offer, suits publishers. Consumers actively look for the best deals and are inclined to get rid of the middlemen that raise prices or create hassle and do not add value. Publishers are looking to nurture their connection to consumers and develop their buying relationships instead of delegate these, so they have better access to marketing information and can build longer-term relationships.

Verhoef et al found that the Internet has a very low lock-in, but is extensively used for research.¹⁵⁰ This again stresses the importance of online visibility of titles, not only through metadata and individual publishers' websites and social media accounts, but through online shops, external blogs, reviews, etc. as well. Influence on the moment of purchase is limited, but since physical shops are still desired by buyers for inspiration and being surprised by what they stumble across there, this phase in the consumer decision journey does not need to be rendered as a black hole for marketing. Publishers benefit from monitoring the available data as closely as possible, and subsequently playing into the observed trends with targeted promotional activities. Collaboration with retailers is vital in this stage, through the use of point-of-sale material, author appearances or joint and shared messages on social media. More valuable marketing data can be retrieved by taking ownership of sales, for the sake of revenue and customer relationship management.

¹⁴⁹ Verhoef, Neslin and Vroomen, 'Multichannel customer management', p. 132.

¹⁵⁰ Verhoef, Neslin and Vroomen, 'Multichannel customer management', p. 146.

4.4 – Post-purchase experience

To continue to nurture the interactive relationship with consumers in this final stage of the decision journey, taking place after the sale is made, is no effort wasted for reasons that I discussed earlier, that principally revolve around reading acculturation and customer loyalty. The post-purchase experience shapes consumers' opinion for later decisions; it can inspire loyalty to a brand. Consumers can be passive loyalists, that stick to a brand they know and cannot bring up the effort of combing through the amount of other products, or active loyalists that do not only stay with a brand but recommend it too. Passive consumers are more likely to be swayed from their brand of choice by others approaching them with attractive alternatives, giving them reasons to leave.¹⁵¹ With increased social media popularity, the field has expanded for the possibilities in enhancing the post-purchase experience and recruiting more active loyalists.

Because of the participative opportunities available to readers, they can also enjoy a different degree of immersion in their favourite books. For publishers, fans creating an open discussion online can boost a title's reach, which in turn can be free and long-lasting promotion. Publishers will also gain a better understanding of their target group which can aid in the improvement of marketing as well as the acquirement of future titles. Reading can be an immersive experience where we lose ourselves in a text and become absorbed by a narrative. In a study on immersion and interactivity in literature, Marie-Laure Ryan makes a distinction between three forms of involvement with narratives: spatial immersion (the response to setting, for example vividly imagining the described smell of flowers), temporal immersion (the response to plot, for example losing sense of time, rushing through a story and not wanting to stop reading: the literal effect of the suspenseful page-turner), and emotional immersion (the response to character, for example empathy for the suffering of fictional characters).¹⁵² What if we could hold onto this intimacy with a story after we finish reading it? Ryan discusses how immersion can be fused with interactivity through games, hypertext, art, theatre, or any other medium that can transcend us into another world where we are not just spectators but players as well.¹⁵³ If readers have the opportunity to continue to

¹⁵¹ Court, Elzinga, Mulder and Vetvik, 'The consumer decision journey'.

¹⁵² M. Ryan, *Narrative as virtual reality: Immersion and interactivity in literature and electronic media* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 121.

¹⁵³ Ryan, *Narrative as virtual reality*, pp. 173-345.

envelop themselves in the imaginary workings of a book, not just by talking about it with others but through other interactive play as well, a community has a longer lifespan and publishers continue to benefit.

Expansions of books in other forms of media like websites or apps are not unusual: *Harry Potter* phenomenon *Pottermore* for example, was more than a platform for a community of fans to interact on.¹⁵⁴ It unlocked additional content that enriched the story and experience through the readers' personal engagement in quizzes and games. *Pottermore* most notably sorted readers into a Hogwarts House and made them part of the story, transforming their passive role into a participative one. Publishers generally have extended focus on the use of original content to connect directly with readers in order to learn more about their interests and collect that data for marketing purposes: the consumer-facing website is one example of this trend.¹⁵⁵ Besides the additions to publications story-wise as is done on *Pottermore*, publishers can bring forward original content in the shape of essays and interviews. Simon & Schuster launched a website, *Glommable*, that showcases a variety of content focused on pop culture in general, instead of singling out particular titles in an attempt to subtly advertise them. As discussed earlier, Blossom Books is a strong Dutch player on this particular field with a frequent output of online content like quizzes ("Which character from [title] are you?") and videos that give the viewer a tour of the publishing house. Lebowski Publishers also hosts a blog to which their authors contribute posts on various topics.¹⁵⁶ Some publishers have started to experiment with podcasts: for example, De Bezige Bij launched a free podcast of an author reading the first 150 pages (in a series of 10 episodes) of his book by way of promotion. Atlas Contact made a similar endeavour with a non-fiction book on the workings of the brain: the podcast series is based on what is discussed in the book. The publisher and author hoped to reach a bigger audience by making the content more accessible like this.¹⁵⁷ The scale and popularity of the *Pottermore* phenomenon is yet to be met by a Dutch initiative, but publishers are actively looking for promotional opportunities that combine different

¹⁵⁴ Pottermore, 'Pottermore – The digital heart of the Wizarding World', <<http://www.pottermore.com>> (27 February 2017).

¹⁵⁵ E. Harvey, 'Consumer-facing websites are the future of book marketing', *Book Business*, 29 July 2015, <<http://www.bookbusinessmag.com/post/consumer-facing-websites-future-book-marketing>> (27 February 2017).

¹⁵⁶ Lebowski Publishers, 'Lebowski Blog', <<https://www.lebowskipublishers.nl/blog>> (28 February 2017).

¹⁵⁷ C. Hoffscholte, 'Uitgeverijen ontdekken de podcast als promotiemiddel', *Boekblad*, 15 December 2016, <<https://boekblad.nl/Nieuws/Item/uitgeverijen-ontdekken-de-podcast-als-promotiemiddel>> (19 April 2017).

media. For example, in the Children's Book Week of 2016, publisher Unieboek | Het Spectrum introduced a special virtual reality app (with accompanying glasses) that played into the content of several of their titles. In the app, players were able to travel to the imaginative worlds described in the books and help different main characters with finding lost items. The publisher distributed the VR glasses across bookshops; upon buying one of the titles, the buyer would receive a free pair.¹⁵⁸

Publishers do well in creating a space for communities to thrive, but must partner up with external platforms too. Goodreads is an international, digital hub for booklovers and reading fans to mainly communicate to friends what books they are reading at the moment. Users can share reviews and recommendations, and Goodreads keeps track of what titles and genres are popular, what new releases there are and what book related events are taking place in your neighbourhood. Besides the aforementioned functionalities, the site posts blogs with interviews and news, and offers plenty of ways for users as well as authors to interact, by discussing what they've read, through comments and message boards, as well as create. For example, users can upload their own written work and make this public for others to read and comment on. Authors sometimes make use of this feature too by posting unpublished bonus chapters or short stories. Goodreads offers this creative, interactive space and encourages authors to participate through their Goodreads Author Program that suggests promotional tools and possibilities.¹⁵⁹ The Goodreads blog also reaches out to publishing professionals and marketers with advice on how to use the site for promotion or insights in book trends. Goodreads proves to be more than a social media platform for avid readers, it has expanded its community to include those working in the business as well. Especially since book retailer Amazon has taken ownership of the site, these connections can be made easier and different stakeholders can be brought closer together.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ E. de Witt, 'Uitgeverij Unieboek | Het Spectrum komt met virtual reality-app voor kinderen', *Boekblad*, 6 September 2016, <<https://boekblad.nl/Nieuws/Item/uitgeverij-unieboek-het-spectrum-komt-met-virtual-reality-app-voor-kinderen>> (19 April 2017).

¹⁵⁹ Goodreads, 'Author Program – Use Goodreads to promote yourself and your books', <<https://www.goodreads.com/author/program>> (28 February 2017).

¹⁶⁰ A. Flood, 'Amazon purchase of Goodreads stuns book industry', *The Guardian*, 2 April 2013, <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/apr/02/amazon-purchase-goodreads-stuns-book-industry>> (19 April 2017).

A Dutch equivalent to Goodreads is Hebban, a user platform brimming with (user) reviews, blogs, reading challenges, ranking lists and literature related news.¹⁶¹ Hebban refers to itself as a reading community and encourages users to form smaller communities within the Hebban circle, by organising and joining online book clubs. The platform does not focus solely on readers but reaches out to professionals from the industry too. Authors can create personal author pages, and booksellers and publishers are invited to create a Hebban Spot, which can form a news feed that focuses on an author, series, imprint or the publisher itself. Hebban is an active player in bringing industry and audience closer together, as well as blurring the lines regarding the increasing involvement of readers in book marketing. This particular platform invites people to become book reviewers for Hebban, which means the reviewer will receive a free copy of the book (which is usually not yet for sale) and the review is featured on the website. This is different from a user review which can be posted by anyone at any time on a personal profile. Book blogs and YouTube reviewers have gained much popularity and, depending on the number of views these sites receive, publishers are usually keen on sending them copies before the official release in exchange for a review.

In *The Loyalty Leap: The 3 Rs of Loyalty*, Bryan Pearson says that in gaining the customer's loyalty, marketers can differentiate three important factors: rewards, recognition, and relevance. The first R, rewards, signifies a tangible gesture of thanks to people for choosing your brand and allowing you to learn about their needs and desires. This falls under the category of the 'hard benefit', a concrete advantage for customers. In addition to this comes the second R for recognition, the 'soft benefit' in the shape of attractive extras like discounts or access to special events that are given to loyalists. However the third R, relevance, is underlined by Pearson as the pivot in generating customer loyalty. Connecting with people by understanding who they are and what they care about creates engagement that people will hold onto in the overflow of alternatives offered through different media and information. Being relevant to consumers means reaching out to people in ways that resonate with their beliefs, ambitions and concerns, and thus will win their unique attention.¹⁶²

Loyalty marketing has become the norm in marketing nowadays, making the post-purchase experience one of the most important stages in the consumer decision

¹⁶¹ Hebban, 'Voor lezers. Door lezers.', <www.hebban.nl> (28 February 2017).

¹⁶² B. Pearson, *The loyalty leap: The 3 Rs of Loyalty* (Penguin, 2012).

journey that can be influenced. Now is an excellent time for publishers to invest in opportunities with immersive qualities, drawing readers into communities publishers themselves can participate in. Multimedial publishing, consumer-facing websites, collaborations with 'curators' (the amateur connoisseurs of popular culture found on YouTube, personal blogs, etc.) or platforms like Goodreads and Hebban, are examples of efforts publishers make in connecting with consumers, reaching them through rewards, recognition and relevance, and hopefully turning them into active loyalists.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have endeavoured to make a case for the trade publisher's capacity to utilize the voice of the reader for corporate benefit. Now more than ever are publishers able to record readers' buying behaviour, preferences and experiences, and can they join in the consumer conversation via communities that have extended beyond the local book club into online platforms where readers, publishers and authors begin to fuse.

The Dutch book market has been in recovery and is growing steadily since the financial-economic crisis. The market is faced with strong national competition as well as competition from foreign (translated) titles, which, in an age of information and supply overflow, makes for a marketing challenge in standing out. The dominant bestseller culture adds to the difficulties, as bestsellers are not necessarily more of a marketing effect than they are a marketing instrument. The achievement of bestseller status is typically exploited by publishers and booksellers alike through various promotional efforts, such as a special bestseller section in stores or a highlighted statement on the cover of a reprint. This attitude toward bestsellers has especially made the workings of book ranking lists questionable: data is usually extracted from a limited selection of sources and collected anonymously which makes it vulnerable to manipulation. Furthermore, the fixed book price policy limits retailers in their selling techniques. It however creates opportunity for 'difficult' titles to break through, and draws attention to the more content-focused promotion of books that consumers will seek out in their evaluation.

Following on the constant increase in content available on the Dutch market, marketers are pressed to attract consumers by creating attention and amplifying the value of a book. As an experience good and recreational product, the circumstances for marketing books are unique. They require a tailored marketing approach, that is ideally even further customized in regard to the different markets/audiences targeted by individual titles. But by marketing *reading* instead of their own titles, publishers are collectively able to cover a wide field of book promotion that eventually benefits their individual sales as well. Dutch publishers are already familiar with working together to popularize reading through numerous national campaigns, but they can do more to stimulate a positive reading attitude by collaborating with libraries and learning from them. Libraries are adept at constructing ways to connect with their members, as their

focus lies much more on having people return to borrow more books: for people to not just buy or borrow a book, but actually read, regularly and enthusiastically. This relationship can be shaped by playing into the consumer's behaviour during the decision journey. As Bhaskar argues, amplification is a fundamental publishing task, and this is evident in marketing where attention is 'created'. The shaping of the relationship with readers is a way of amplification, because readers are able to convey and widely distribute content across various networks.

Publishers can work on the relationship by reaching out to readers in ways similar to what libraries are doing, but the encouragement of reading culture forms the basis. During the consumer decision journey, readers are in varying degrees approachable and open to connection. The establishment of a brand, most notably the author brand, is especially valuable as it attracts loyal readers and can steer a reader into a certain direction in the early stage of his/her buying motivation. The brand continues to be of value when readers are actively evaluating their options, as strong brands are in line with a strong online presence. We have integrated new/social media into our lives to a substantial degree; communities have extended to online platforms and are now easily shaped as connections between readers are made effortlessly. The information culture that has come into existence from these personal networks is now more significant than the knowledge obtained from traditional, 'official' channels. Through community building and participation, publishers can contribute to the discussion. Authors (supported by publishers) are in an especially favourable position to engage in communities owing to their personal nature, and thus play a valued part in (online) book promotion.

Through awareness of reader communities and by participating in these, publishers do enjoy a fair amount of influencing power when it comes to marketing their books, but when it comes to the moment of purchase, the retailer usually takes over. Small, independent publishers are more inclined to cut away these middle men by going direct-to-consumer, providing them with additional revenue and, most importantly, access to valuable consumer data. Consumers also like to be part of the buying process and actively make a decision instead of being told what to purchase. So in this stage as well, the promotion of books in general appears to be preferable compared to a focus on individual titles. After a decision is made, the post-purchase experience is vital in triggering a loyalty loop that will bring someone back to a brand,

or in this case inspire them to read another book. Playing into the immersive aspects of books, as well as collaborating with consumers and other platforms, and cleverly exploiting communities, publishers can form useful and influential strategies in this final phase in the decision journey.

Hence the key publishing task of amplification can and should be applied by marketers, and indirectly consumers, as well: content is conveyed to readers who continue to communicate this to their networks and increase its exposure. Reader relationship management thus equals amplification of titles. In this thesis I have discussed the dynamics of book marketing and the significant role that reading promotion has there. With the development of author brands on social media and reader communities online, it is clear that the acculturation of reading has much potential in supporting customer loyalty in the book business. Current efforts by publishers in general seem to only scratch the surface of what is possible in (online) relationship management. Perhaps this is because the focus usually lies on marketing individual titles (and sometimes authors) and publishers appear to have little regard for reading acculturation. A lost opportunity, because while the publisher feels pressured in thinking commercially in order to survive, the direct sales made from particular title marketing are unremarkable compared to the increase in book buyers that ensues by attracting new readers. A marketing department that needs to strictly divide its attention between many different titles, or only focuses on low-risk titles, spends money on projects that cannot promise certain returning sales. At the same time, with marketing focused on low-risk titles alone publishers may not be aware of the audience for a particular debut title. Publishers joining in the care of reading culture is in the end, beneficial for all. Especially by observing the individual stages of the reader's decision-making process are professionals able to control and make use of the consumer environment. And by collaborating with other stakeholders in the book industry and pooling resources like consumer behaviour data and sales numbers, there are plenty of possibilities to attain these goals. For a better understanding of how much publishers would notice the effects of reading promotion, future research on this type of marketing analysed over a longer period of time for individual publishers would be interesting. In addition, a deeper analysis of individual marketing activities, where these fit in the consumer decision journey and what results can be measured from them, could be useful in encouraging publishers in cooperative efforts and shaping the image of

reading promotion in general. More research on the mysterious bestseller, and to what extent individual publishers use it as a marketing instrument, as well as research on ranking lists is desirable for the sake of creating more transparency: for example, bookshops can provide insight in the data they hand to ranking lists. The collective consumption of books now takes place in a converging environment, where the traditional roles fade into the background, and book enthusiasts and professionals can find ways to interact that are mutually beneficial.

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