**Strategic Brand Management Tools in Publishing**

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***Abstract:*** *Further to the introduction of the brand concept evolution and theory, as well as the ways these operate in the publishing sector (see paper: Pitsaki, I. 2010)\*, the present paper treats publishing strategies and the tools used to establish them. Publishers often base their brand strategy on classic marketing approaches, such as the marketing mix -product, price, promotion, placement and people. They also direct their products to specific market segments in regard to the type of content and texts (generalist universal, specialized universal and specialized local strategy). However, advanced marketing models and tools are often ignored by publishers. This paper shows how advanced concepts, mindsets and marketing models could operate in the publishing sector. More specifically, in order to establish a brand strategy it is proposed to take into consideration the different levels of experience obtained through the purchase and reading of a book or a book series. These levels involve the aesthetic emotion, the quality aspects of the product and the associated messages or services. Another recommendation is the use of branding tools, such as the hierarchy and the brand-product matrix. These tools reveal the interrelation between the brands and the products of a company and forecast how they will interact in the marketplace. This is due to the fact that, in the publishing sector, books and all products can be simultaneously branded at many different levels; in a book coexist the corporate brand, the author and the genre as brand as well as other brand dimensions. The above ideas are introduced in order to offer a more solid action framework in publishing, and more precisely in the specification of brand strategies.*

**Keywords:** Strategy, Brand Management, Marketing, Tools, Publishing

**Previous Paper Summary[[1]](#footnote-1)**

In a previous paper, publishing brand concept evolution and theory were introduced. Initially, a distinction between the *supply* and *demand* brand perspectives was made in order to arrive to an integrative concept. Under this concept, a brand is seen as an intermediary between the company and its clients, as well as a channel for exchange; through brands, companies can introduce products, and people can perceive values and have their needs fulfilled.

More specifically, the brand is defined as “something that resides in the minds of consumers. A brand is a perceptual entity that is rooted in reality, but it is also more than that, reflecting the perceptions and perhaps even the idiosyncrasies of consumers. To brand a product it is necessary to teach consumers ‘who’ the product is (by giving it a name and using other brand elements to help identify it) as well as what the product does and why consumers should care. In other words, to brand a product or service, it is necessary to give consumers a *label* for the product (i.e. here’s how you can identify the product) and to provide *meaning* for the brand to consumers (i.e. here’s what this particular product can do for you and why it is special and different from other brand name products)” (K.L. Keller, 2003: 13).

According to these arguments, a publishing product could become a brand if granted a special meaning. The brands of a single publishing company act on different levels (corporate, product, author or content[[2]](#footnote-2)) and may complement or influence one another. For example, corporate brand may interact with series brand. Thusly, a clear bond may form between a series and other series of the same publishing house. For that reason, in order to establish a publishing brand strategy, it is fundamental to know the potential relation between brand and products and to specify what the interactions between the different brands will be at different level. The ways and tools used for that are explained in the following lines.

**Brand Strategies**

Generally speaking, certain brands compete through a direct association with the product and its pure nature, while others stand out by associating themselves with what they represent; brands are symbols that generate emotions and determine lifestyles. Respectively, in the case of book, brand strategies could focus on the product attributes and characteristics such as the literary genre, format, or aesthetic quality. These kinds of strategies[[3]](#footnote-3) are based on marketing approaches, and may be considered traditional; they pay more attention to the product, price, promotion and distribution (*marketing mix*).[[4]](#footnote-4) On the other hand, for publishing brands, emphasis could be put on values associated with the product and its relation to individuals’ desires.

Brand often represents more than the simple acquisition of a good or the satisfaction of a few basic needs. It is a symbol of a position or philosophy of life with which certain individuals identify. Brand is, in many ways, a reflection of individuals’ concerns and ambitions. A New Age series is directed at a group of readers who in various aspects of their lives adopt the beliefs of this movement, and therefore follow a certain lifestyle. In the same way, some people read books mainly to be able to talk about them with friends and colleagues. In this case, the social effect provoked by the act of reading is primary. The ambition of these readers is to stay up-to-date and informed on the best-sellers and popular authors.

New trends in marketing bring about innovative strategies that respond to this kind of human behavior. J.Ñ. Kapferer and G. Laurent (1991:39) speak of the functions of the brand for the buyer, adding, to functions of *identification and guarantee*, additional functions of:

* reference, which helps the buyer structure the offer;
* recreational, which corresponds to the pleasure that the individual experiences when shopping;
* practicality, which lends the brand a role in the memorization at work in complex decision-making processes; and finally,
* personalization, related, in a certain sense, to the idea of lifestyle.

With respect to this last function, the authors state:

“The function of personalization corresponds to the notion that choosing certain brands allows buyers to situate themselves with regard to their social environment; with this choice, they manifest the desire to differentiate themselves, or, on the contrary, integrate. Brand is an element through which consumers may communicate who they are or who they want to be in the eyes of others.”

Personalization is frequently present in online shopping exchanges. This forum, as a new means of communication with the public and a new model of merchandise distribution, promoted the role of brands and the utilization of strategies deriving from new marketing approaches.

Within recent years, the personalization-based virtual bookstore *Amazon.com*, has become an example of a successful brand frequently referenced in marketing and business-related literature. What engendered its initial success, and allowed it later on to go on to merchandise products of diverse nature (CDs, toys, software or cars)? According to various authors, low prices are not the only reason behind *Amazon.com’s* leading position (L.M. Zapico Aldeano and A.I. Jiménez Zarco, 2004:40). The major competitive advantage came out of offering personalized service. The central backbone of this business is the customer, and the strategy treats each one as the unique individual he or she is. Here are some features of this service:

1. Featured contents are presented according to the user profile, and determined during the log-in process.
2. The user receives personal emails providing updated information on products of interest, or on the state of the user’s account and purchases.
3. Users are offered personalized gift suggestions.
4. Customers are offered titles from their areas of interests.
5. Registered customers receive special offers, and many other features with a similar approach.

The internet is sometimes used to strengthen relationships created with the public and sometimes as a unique way of reaching it (for example, online orders only). If a recently published book is sold on a website, the reader may obtain more information on the work or its author, read reviews, and get in touch with the publishing house or even contact the author directly. A book is also a cultural product, similar to other products in this category, such as art exhibits, theatrical and musical functions, as well as any other product deriving from a creative act. The outline proposed by E. Hill, C. O´Sullivan and T. O´ Sullivan (1995:105), reproduced below, presents the four different levels of a cultural product with respect to the experience obtained through its consumption; the kind of pages and what they offer correspond to the extended experience. This, then, may be seen as part of the product itself, or as an extension thereof.

E. Hill, C. O´Sullivan and T. O´ Sullivan (1995:105), began with a series of conceptual maps developed by Kotler and Andreasen (1991) and elaborated a model to describe the four levels of a cultural product with respect to the experience obtained through its consumption. Their objective was to help businesses improve and maintain their positions by consolidating the benefits offered to the public. The outline was adapted to the publishing market, based on findings from a case study carried out in the framework of this paper.

*“The four levels of a publishing product with respect to the experience acquired through its consumption”*

*Core benefit:* as shown in the diagram, reading and its derived benefits – emotion, aesthetic satisfaction, education, etc. – are at the center. What determines the core benefit, without being limited thereto, is the content of the book. It is important for a publisher to carefully examine the product from the work-reader interaction point of view. Similarly, reading habits must be taken into account. For example, reading a novel awakens emotions, evokes memory and provokes reflection, but it is also a pretext for resting, escaping routine, constructing an imagined desired identity, enjoying solitude or providing a topic of conversation among friends.

*Central experience:* various factors are closely tied to the core benefit; among them are the difficulty or ease of attaining the book; the selection process; the circumstances around the reading; the satisfaction of aesthetic needs through the graphic design and materials utilized in production, as well as the legibility, or nature of interaction in the case of multi- media books; the identity of the product as a system that validates its qualities or the need to own it. On this level, the publishing house must be very careful to project a product identity at once coherent and easy to perceive, and that may be confirmed through the core benefit. Thus, the company earns the appreciation of its customers and establishes a relation- ship of trust with them.

*Extended experience:* extended experience is closely related to central experience. It involves all kinds of efforts made by the company to inform readers on a book and get them to remember its characteristics. It also involves focusing on the dimension of the book with respect to a comparable good, with the objective of assuming a privileged place in the memory of the consumer. At this level, the publishing house tends to concern itself with the application of marketing mix strategies or the elaboration of communication programs.

*Potential experience:* potential experience involves establishing a deeper relationship with the reader, who probably decides to become a collector,[[5]](#footnote-5) join a club, or acquire various books belonging to a single series. A book series is understood as a set of books with commonalities in appearance (the publishing house’s graphic design), content (subject or genre) or type of author (classic or contemporary). Potential experience is related to the capacity that the publishing house has to add value to its products. It may do this through launching systems of innovation or searching out competitive advantages, which also contribute to the brand strategies adapted.

A good understanding of the different levels of experience acquired through a book or another cultural product is very useful for companies. It may serve as a guide in product management and design. Further, it explores the role that marketing techniques play in the formulation of this experience and the satisfaction of readers’ desires. This way, the reader- book link becomes even more solid, particularly when the company offers a special deal or various options for each reader, adjusted to his or her particular selections or preferences.

Returning to the use of the internet as part of publishing strategy, we may add that it is common for companies to maintain their own sites, through which they offer their publications. These are the meeting points between the corporate brand and the rest of the brands merchandised by the same publishing house (series, books and authors). *A brand strategy must also consider the way in which the brand relates to other brands, how it fits into the company’s or group’s general strategy, how it has developed over time, and what it can bring to the existent publishing brand ecosystem. Strategic brand marketing, therefore, ought to provide a solution to the concerns that go beyond the mere construction of brand value*. Let’s take a look at how we might develop a brand strategy with regard to other existent publishing house brands.

To determine brand strategies, we must first establish an interrelation between the brands and the products. We must also decide which brand elements (such as logos and slogans) should be incorporated into which products. There are two tools, mentioned by K.L. Keller, often used in strategy determination and management: a) *brand-product matrix* and b) *brand hierarchy*. In a brand-product matrix, as we can see from the diagram, the rows show the brand’s relationship to the products, and the columns, the products’ relationships to the brands. From a strategic standpoint, in the first case we see the strategy’s *broadness* and *extension* represented; in the second, we observe its *depth* (K.L. Keller, 2003: 521-24). The broadness of the brand strategy reveals the number and nature of products associated with the company’s brands, while depth shows the number and nature of the brands merchandised for the same kind of product. We use two different brands in order to approach different market segments and achieve better product merchandising. The matrix is a useful tool for managing different brands within a single company.

*“Brand-product matrix”*

In addition to creating the matrix, it is important to establish a system of *hierarchy* that illustrates the explicit ordering of the brand elements. The hierarchy shows the number and nature of common or distinctive elements of all the company’s products. Therefore, a good grasp of the potential relationship between the brand and the products is absolutely fundamental. Brand hierarchy is based on the idea that products can be managed in various ways, depending on the brand elements used, and the combination chosen for each product. There are different ways of defining the brand elements and the levels of the hierarchy. One of the simplest ways is to go top-to-bottom, starting with the *corporation* and moving towards *family brand*, *individual brand*, and *modifier* – in other words, the model or specific product (K.L. Keller, 2003: 536-42).

This is a hierarchy very often applied in the publishing world. It entails starting with corporate brand; the company uses its identification signs and dresses the product with its values. In Spain, where this research had been conducted, publishing houses often place their names and logos in prominent parts of the book covers. There are also other elements in the appearance of a series that make the book easy to identify as the product of a particular publishing house. People recognize the established colors and composition, often times just by catching a glimpse of the spine on a shelf in a bookshop.

However, based on results from a case study carried out within the framework of this re- search, we can say that the hierarchy that prioritizes the corporation is not the most popular in all the countries. For instance in England, the publishing house name does not often appear on the book cover, and various works published by a single publishing house often have very different appearances. A small symbol or anagram might be used, but with much discretion, and only on the spine. From this observation we may conclude that in England, brand strategy is more frequently associated with the author. Marketing efforts center is around presenting the author as a “star.” By contrast, corporate brand has much more importance in Spain. Many publishing houses, such as *El Acantilado* and *Lengua de Trapo*, base their strategies on the corporate brand’s creation of value. Both aforementioned publishing houses are independent, which once again reminds us that brand strategies are especially beneficial for small or medium-sized companies seeking a good position in a specific and somewhat limited market segment.

In the aforementioned hierarchy, corporate brand is followed by family brand, which also appears frequently in the Spanish publishing scene. A family brand is a brand used for products of different categories, and which at times coincides with the corporate brand. For example, the publishing house *Destino Infantil & Juvenil* may be seen as a corporate brand (of the publishing house *Destino* itself) or as a family brand. In the case of the latter, a corporate brand might be the *Planeta Group[[6]](#footnote-6)* (as global corporation it is) or *Editorial Destino* publications for adults, as publishing house related to *Destino Infantil & Juvenil*. However, in the first case, *Destino Infantil & Juvenil* may be seen as a family brand. Its products are organized into groups of books by category, and configured in series, for readers of different segments (ages). Many of these series, such as “*Ilustrados*,” “*Miffy*,” “*Premio Apel.les Mestres*,” etc. do not represent independent brands, as they are not identified by individual logo, a series name or other elements necessary for a product to acquire brand dimension. In this case, there is a single dominant brand: that of *Destino Infantil & Juvenil*, the umbrella for all the different products (series). To sum up, we assert that this kind of family brand is a one used in multiple categories of publishing products.

It is much more common in the publishing sector for a book series to represent an individual brand affiliated with a corporate brand. An individual brand is used for products of the same category or different kinds of products within the same category. For example, a poetry collection from *Lumen* publishing house is an individual brand; it has its own logo, graphic design, symbolic value and added value that derive from its tradition as a series and the importance of the poets published therein. In that case, we are dealing with an individual brand with products of the same category, as they each represent contemporary poetry col-

lections by prominent authors.[[7]](#footnote-7)

The “*Grumetes*” series from the Catalan publishing house La Galera would be an example of an individual brand with different types of products within the same category. “*Grumetes*” is a series of narratives for children and young adults. There are four different collections within this series: yellow, green, red and blue. Each color corresponds to a certain age bracket: 7-8, 8-9, 10-12, and 12 & up, respectively. The appearance, quantity, and reading level of the texts and illustrations are adapted to suit the needs of the different reader categories. Each age group constitutes a different market segment to which the brand is directed. Thus, we move from the corporate brand (*La Galera*) to the individual brand (“*Grumetes*”) and the different products (red, yellow, green, blue collections) within the same category (children’s literature). Based on findings from a case study, another hierarchy we might establish for the same examples might start at the corporate brand (*La Galera*) and move towards the family brand (“*Grumetes*”), and then onto the individual brand (yellow, red, blue and green series) and the different products (the books).

The modifier comes at the bottom of the hierarchy, and is a result of producing a model, variation, version, or specific product type for any brand. For example, a pocket-sized publication of a work originally published in an (individual) series-brand is a modifier, so long as the publication is not produced in a pocket-series that constitutes a brand in and of itself. In this case, the pocket edition is affiliated with the pocket-series brand, and not so strongly with the series in which it was published in its original format.

Brand hierarchy helps us evaluate how a company manages its brands and designs its strategies. It also reveals what the dominant brand is in each case, given that there may be various coexisting brands in a single product. In a book series, both the series brand, as well as those of the publishing house and the author brands, are present, and each serves a unique purpose. When selecting a new strategy or modifying an old one, it is essential to understand the hierarchy at hand, determine the dominant brand and gauge its relationship to the rest of the brands. This enables priorities in the brand associations to be established, with the objective of achieving the series’ desired market position.

Generally, the brand hierarchy is an ideal tool for determining strategy in the publishing world, and it is also described in detail in a previous paper on Strategic Publishing Brand Management[[8]](#footnote-8). More specifically, in this previous study, the brand hierarchy it is analyzed starting with the corporation and moving towards the series, author and content. These four perspectives demonstrate what exactly a brand is in a publishing context with regard to some common categories. For more conclusions on the ways brand hierarchy could be used as a tool for strategic brand management in the publishing sector, the reader is encouraged to study this previous paper and contrast results with the present one.

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1. Pitsaki I. (2010). Brand Concepts in Publishing. *The International Journal of the Book*. Common Ground, Australia, Volume 7, Issue 2 (pp. 85-97) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. These brand categories and their interrelation are extensively explained in the paper: Pitsaki I. (2008). Strategic Publishing Brands Management. *The International Journal of the Book*. Common Ground, Australia, Volume 5, Issue 3 (pp. 103-114). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Certain strategies used in the publishing sector are determined based on the market or segment to which it is directed, and with regard to the type of content that the company puts into circulation. Specifically, the strategies are as follows: a) generalist and universal, b) specialist and universal, c) specialized and localized.

*Generalist universal strategy:* this is the strategy most often adopted by large publishing groups. It is important to note that this strategy becomes specialized when it is employed by smaller companies of the same group, in order to cover different market segments.

*Specialist universal strategy:* this is the strategy generally adopted by those publishing houses that specialize in speciic, well-known and easily recognizable ields, but at the same time, depend on structures that allow them to operate and distribute their goods in other countries.

*Specialized localized strategy:* this strategy corresponds to medium or small publishing houses that operate on a local scale and adapt to the needs of a limited public (publication in minority languages and others).

These strategies can be applied by any publishing brand, regardless of its afiliation with a corporation, collection, author, or product, and independent of its category or genre. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This refers to the four components of all marketing strategies, also known as *the four p’s* (product, price, placement, promotion). The product is the company’s raison d’être; price refers not only to the monetary value attributed thereto, but also to the effort that the consumer makes to attain it; placement involves, first and foremost, delivery and logistics, channels and agents of delivery, as well as sales points; promotion is a prime marketing component and involves publicity, public relations, personal sales and sales promotion. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Becoming a ‘collector,’ in this case, does not indicate acquiring various works of a book series that a publishing house launches to achieve a loyal readership by projecting a clear and well-described identity. Here, ‘collecting’ refers to acquiring fascicles (publishing products for collectors). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Planeta* is the group of companies to which *Destino* belongs, as well as *Destino Infantil & Juvenil* (books for young adult readers). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Lumen is among the publishing houses analyzed in the case study. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Pitsaki I. (2008). Strategic Publishing Brands Management. *The International Journal of the Book*. Common Ground, Australia, Volume 5, Issue 3 (pp. 105-114). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)