

Sonja Schlusche: Newspapers and Books: A Successful Combination? A Study of Book Series from the German News Industry, 2004–2006.

The German book market is in flux. In this traditional sector of the economy, increasing economic efficiency is required. New impulses are also coming from news journalism, which is a new participant in the publication of books or book-like products. Due to an economic and structural crisis after the turn of the millennium, news publishers were forced to undertake new initiatives and to develop new strategies to compensate for their sales collapse. After several failed attempts at reorganization, they have worked out new diversification strategies based on their various media brands. In this way, media corporations were able to supplement their core business of selling newspapers and advertising with an expanded product range. Since 2004, the most successful of the new products have been book series, which provide a new long-term source of revenue and at the same time boost the image of the respective newspaper or magazine and strengthen its links with readers.

Elsewhere in Europe and outside of it, book series have contributed to rising sales for media corporations since 2000. Since the launch of the *SZ-Bibliothek*, the first German book series, by the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, book collections from news journalism companies have gained an increasing degree of popularity in Germany and have become recognized as a genre in their own right in the book trade. Despite this success, there has been no comprehensive study of this media phenomenon until now. This thesis will therefore trace the development of the new market segment.

The analysis will show that all of the book series are based on complex yet similar marketing concepts. The editorial strategy consists of publishing backlist titles whose popularity has waned in new packaging. In acquiring publication rights, the editors benefit from the backlist fatigue of the traditional book trade, which has become primarily focused on publishing new works, so that publication rights to older works can be acquired inexpensively. Alternatively, publishers from the journalism sector can supply their own content. Publication in both print and audio book format is the norm. For this, news journalism corporations typically cooperate with traditional book publishers. In contrast, regional newspapers often undertake horizontal cooperation and consequently share risks and costs.

The success of a series depends on synergy effects that allow for economic efficiency at all stages of development, from design and production to distribution and marketing. Accordingly, the editorial staff is responsible for the series concept and book selection. The publisher's production department specifies product design, while the company's production facilities or those of a partner produce the books or audio books. The publishers draw on their existing distribution structures. Existing customer service and subscription systems allow for direct marketing of the editions. Publishing houses count on

wide-area distribution and use established distribution channels. Book series and anthologies are sold not only through the book retail trade and direct marketing, but also by wholesale dealers and on the secondary market in order to increase their range and number of customers outside the traditional book market. In 2006, however, the news journalism publishers preferred retail sales as the main distribution channel to attain wide market penetration of their books and book-like production.

Through in-house advertising in existing media, the series and anthologies can be advertised throughout the country at the cost of some lost advertising revenue. The boundary between objective reporting to surreptitious advertising is often fluid, which has brought the reproach of media critics. Publishers often mount extensive advertising campaigns in television, radio, and print media on behalf of their series and anthologies. The journalistic anthologies are often noteworthy for combining both a low price with high quality content and design. Consequently, it is possible to reach the mass audience required for a large print run. A large print run results in low per copy production costs. With a uniform product design in terms of content and layout, editors can turn each work in a series into a collector's item. The uniform design of each edition and incentives for buying a whole collection encourage consumers to buy multiple volumes, preferably to obtain the whole collection. Moreover, it is possible to amplify this by emphasizing the canonicity of the collection in advertising, which at the same time provides readers with an orientation guide for an overflowing book market. The newspaper or magazine's brand name also acts as a sign of quality that should inspire trust in readers. This thesis concludes that early journalistic series indeed acquired a certain value for collectors. The value dropped along with the decreasing novelty of these series. Today, the trade in special editions can only be considered a take-away market.

As a result of oversupply of newspaper book series and, consequently, an increased number of competitors, news journalism publishers specialized their products. Accordingly, it is possible to identify five types of editions, apart from the early literature series that covered a vast range of genres. These five types include: series that specialize on specific genres, market niche collections, and book-alike collections. Furthermore, companies developed combined products or used their own existing databases to form original newspaper compilations.

Even though journalistic book series do not violate the uniform legal price for books, the resentment towards this industry sector is pronounced. Eventually, the aggressive marketing strategies of the news journalism companies caused a shift in existing price points and are partially responsible for the decline in the average prices for fiction. This results in a competition between the previous editions of a work and the newspaper edition, which consumers prefer as the cheaper alternative. It was not possible to determine whether these special offers influenced consumers' price perception. However, the new editions also meant more customers for book retail sales and won new customers to the book market as a whole. Altogether, sales of traditional also rose. Newspaper book collections are not substitute products and do not appear to harm the book publishing indus-

try as a whole. Moreover, the market for newspaper book collections appears to be saturated and some news journalism publishers are looking beyond the book market to expand their product line. Nevertheless, media companies showed that aggressive marketing and profit-oriented commerce with the book as commodity can yield impressive results in the book trade. This marketing concept can be understood as an example of how the “dusty and old-fashioned” book can prevail against multimedia competition.