WORD OF MOUTH AND ZOMBIES

by

Heiko Binder
B.Sc., Stuttgart Media University, 2008

Project submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Publishing
In the Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology

© Heiko Binder, 2009
Simon Fraser University
Fall 2009

All rights reserved. However, in accordance with the Copyright Act of Canada, this work may be reproduced, without authorization, under the conditions for Fair Dealing. Therefore, limited reproduction of this work for the purposes of private study, research, criticism, review and news reporting is likely to be in accordance with the law, particularly if cited appropriately.
NAME: Heiko Binder

DEGREE: Master of Publishing

TITLE OF PROJECT: Word of Mouth and Zombies

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

Roberto Dosil
Senior Lecturer, Master of Publishing Program
Simon Fraser University

John Maxwell
Assistant Professor, Master of Publishing Program
Simon Fraser University

Jamie Broadhurst
Vice-President of Marketing
Raincoast Books,
Vancouver, British Columbia

DATE APPROVED: December 19, 2009
Declaration of Partial Copyright Licence

The author, whose copyright is declared on the title page of this work, has granted to Simon Fraser University the right to lend this thesis, project or extended essay to users of the Simon Fraser University Library, and to make partial or single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the library of any other university, or other educational institution, on its own behalf or for one of its users.

The author has further granted permission to Simon Fraser University to keep or make a digital copy for use in its circulating collection (currently available to the public at the “Institutional Repository” link of the SFU Library website <www.lib.sfu.ca> at: <http://ir.lib.sfu.ca/handle/1892/112>) and, without changing the content, to translate the thesis/project or extended essays, if technically possible, to any medium or format for the purpose of preservation of the digital work.

The author has further agreed that permission for multiple copying of this work for scholarly purposes may be granted by either the author or the Dean of Graduate Studies.

It is understood that copying or publication of this work for financial gain shall not be allowed without the author’s written permission.

Permission for public performance, or limited permission for private scholarly use, of any multimedia materials forming part of this work, may have been granted by the author. This information may be found on the separately catalogued multimedia material and in the signed Partial Copyright Licence.

While licensing SFU to permit the above uses, the author retains copyright in the thesis, project or extended essays, including the right to change the work for subsequent purposes, including editing and publishing the work in whole or in part, and licensing other parties, as the author may desire.

The original Partial Copyright Licence attesting to these terms, and signed by this author, may be found in the original bound copy of this work, retained in the Simon Fraser University Archive.

Simon Fraser University Library
Burnaby, BC, Canada
ABSTRACT

The project report Word of Mouth and Zombies approaches the question of what publishers can do when a new book title gets extraordinary attention among readers online.

It takes the book Pride and Prejudice and Zombies as a case study and examines the reasoning behind what caused the viral success as well as what the American publisher Quirk Books and the Canadian distributor Raincoast Books did to support the word of mouth developments.

This report shows that a small publishing company can capitalize financial success out of online buzz and points out how important it is to engage in a conversation with end customers and provide new platforms and topics to discuss. It illustrates how the publisher used the advantages of the Internet and social media tools to keep word of mouth going over several months and how it helped the book to become a bestseller.

Keywords: book publishing; word of mouth; viral marketing; social media
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank Raincoast Books for hosting my internship and supporting me in the realization of this project report.

I would like to thank the whole marketing team, especially Jamie Broadhurst who shared his knowledge and sources about the fascination of word of mouth, as well as Siobhan Long, Danielle Johnson, Norah Perkins, and Chelsey Cadham who indefatigably sent me zombie and monster related materials and always helped with my questions.

Many thanks to the US-publishing company Quirk Books. Without the great support of Brett Cohen and his marketing team I could not have written this report. Thank you for answering all my questions and being open to share insights into the history and marketing of Pride and Prejudice and Zombies.

I would also like to thank my supervisors at Simon Fraser University, Roberto Dosil and John Maxwell, as well as my supervisor at Raincoast Books, Jamie Broadhurst, for their encouragement and support.
# Table of Contents

Approval ii  
Abstract iii  
Acknowledgements iv  
List of Figures vi  

1 Introduction 1  
1.1 Word-of-mouth marketing 2  
1.2 The Publisher, Quirk Books 3  
1.3 Distribution and Marketing in Canada, Raincoast Books 4  
1.4 The Creation of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* 5  
1.5 *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*’ Position on the Market 6  

2 *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*’ Word of Mouth 8  
2.1 Spreading the Word Online 8  
2.2 *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* Reviews 15  

3 Marketing Analysis of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* 20  
3.1 Marketing and Publicity 20  
  3.1.1 Industry-Oriented Marketing 22  
  3.1.2 Media- and Blogger-Oriented Marketing 23  
  3.1.3 Customer-Oriented Marketing 27  
3.2 Correlation between Viral Development and Marketing 48  
3.3 The Role of the Retailer Sector 50  

4 Marketing for *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters* 52  

5 Conclusions 57  
5.1 The Actions of the Publisher 57  
  5.2.1 Tracking the Word of Mouth 57  
  5.2.2 Supporting the Conversations 58  
  5.2.3 Communication within the Industry 58  
5.2 Final Statement 59  

6 Bibliography 60
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Figures</th>
<th>Name of Figure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>Cover image of <em>Pride and Prejudice and Zombies</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>Cover image of <em>Pride and Prejudice</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>Media package of <em>Pride and Prejudice and Zombies</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Figure 4</td>
<td>Illustrations of <em>Pride and Prejudice and Zombies</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Figure 5</td>
<td>Cover image of <em>Pride and Prejudice and Zombies Deluxe Heirloom Edition</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Figure 6</td>
<td>Full-colour paintings of <em>Pride and Prejudice and Zombies Deluxe Heirloom Edition</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Figure 7</td>
<td>Google Insights search for <em>Pride and Prejudice and Zombies</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Figure 8</td>
<td>Trailer screenshot of <em>Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Figure 9</td>
<td>Google Insights search for <em>Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 INTRODUCTION

“There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about.”
(Oscar Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray)

The large number of books that are published annually in North America make it a challenge for publishers to interest readers in a specific title. The United States alone releases ten thousand new fiction titles every year.¹ Therefore it is not surprising that readers rely to a large extent on recommendations from booksellers, friends, and family. They like to talk about the books they read and want others to enjoy the same books. From a marketing perspective, this phenomenon of word of mouth is key to making a title successful. Word of mouth is defined as “the communication about products and services between people who are perceived to be independent of [a] company.”² Even though word of mouth always has existed, recent developments around the Internet, such as blogging, and social networking have increased the speed, impact, and especially the reach of word of mouth and therefore made it even more important for the book industry.

What is the best way for book publishers to deal with word of mouth? How can they interact with consumers successfully and take advantage of these new opportunities?

This project report takes the book Pride and Prejudice and Zombies as a case study and explores how word of mouth triggered the success of the book in the USA and Canada. It examines how the word of mouth started and developed, what made it strong, and puts it in context to the actions and the marketing activities of the publishers.

¹  Miller 2004
Finally this report showcases an example of what requirements are necessary for publishers to deal with word of mouth, how they can have a positive impact on it and how they can capitalize the most success out of it.

1.1 Word-of-mouth marketing

Customers suffer from the vast amount of marketing messages that they are forced to consume. Experts estimate that the average person comes across fifteen hundred ads every day.\(^3\) It is hardly surprising that people quickly learn how to tune out advertising in their daily life. Therefore, to stand out marketing has to be somehow different to get noticed and remembered.\(^4\)

Completely different in the way they are accepted by customers are personal recommendations. People rely on the advice of friends, family and other people that they know personally or consider trustworthy. This applies even more for leisure activities that can only be judged subjectively by the taste of the consumer – books for example. According to a World Book Day Survey, almost one third of readers under thirty-five cite personal recommendations by family members or colleagues as the reason why they read their last book. Only six percent stated that they read a book because of an advertisement.\(^5\)

Personal recommendations are the foundation of word of mouth and therefore are more valuable than a company’s traditional marketing. Publishers can get involved and influence the word of mouth to their advantage.

Andy Sernovitz, CEO of the Word-of-Mouth Marketing Association, states in his book *Word-of-mouth marketing* that “Word of Mouth is about genuine communications.”\(^6\) Customers can’t be forced or tricked into spreading positive

---

\(^3\) Rosen, Anatomy of Buzz, 14.  
\(^4\) Rosen, Anatomy of Buzz, 14.  
\(^5\) Jury 2005.  
\(^6\) Sernovitz, Word-of-mouth marketing, 30.
word of mouth. He points out that in “many cases, word of mouth ‘marketing’ isn’t actually marketing at all.” It is rather about having a good product that people love and supporting the word of mouth development with good customer service.

What has changed recently are the opportunities that the online world offers to track the word of mouth about a specific product. Recommendations and product discussions that, until a few years ago, used to take place in the privacy of a customer’s peer circle, are increasingly found online. For customers this development has the advantage that they can share their opinion and ask for recommendations about basically any kind of product from a much wider circle of users. For companies it offers the opportunity to read what people think about their product, to get genuine feedback about problems, and to learn something about their customers. Most of all it offers the opportunity to get involved.

This case study examines in detail how Quirk Books and Raincoast Books took advantage of the word of mouth that spread around *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, and showcases the basic elements that publishers have to keep in mind while trying to use word of mouth as a marketing tool.

1.2 The Publisher, Quirk Books
Announcing themselves as the first publisher of “impractical reference and irreverent nonfiction,” Quirk Books is an American publishing house based in Philadelphia. It was founded by David Borgenicht, the author of the *Worst Case Scenario* series, and is, with fourteen employees, a comparably small company. Quirk’s list includes humour books, pop culture books, gift books, and reference books.

---

Following its mission to “amuse, to bemuse, to entertain, and to inform,”8 Quirk Books has been successful in making several books bestsellers, the latest one being *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies.*9

Most of the activities to support the word of mouth around *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* were started and pursued by Quirk Books or the author Seth Grahame-Smith in the United States, but had an influence on the Canadian book market as well. In promoting books there are hardly any borders on the Internet between adjacent countries, especially if they share the same language as do Canada and the USA. Social networks, blogs, and online communities are often visited by online users of both countries. Online marketing that was started in the United States by Quirk Books therefore often reached Canadian readers and supported the book in Canada too.

Due to its focus on social networking and online marketing activities this report is to a large extent about marketing activities that were started in the USA by Quirk Books. However the information is completed by details of Raincoast’s additional marketing to Canadian readers and Canadian media companies.

1.3 Distribution and Marketing in Canada, Raincoast Books

Raincoast Books is a Canadian company based in Vancouver, British Columbia. It was founded in 1979 by Mark Stanton and Allan MacDougall as a book wholesaler and publisher. Besides representing Canadian and international book publishers in the Canadian book market Raincoast published a variety of children and adult fiction and non-fiction titles. In Spring 2008 Raincoast announced the closing of their publishing program to concentrate on their core business of distribution and

---

8 Quirk Books’ official website
9 Quirk Books’ official website
marketing. Today they represent over fifty publishers in the Canadian book market in distribution and marketing. One of them is the US publisher Quirk Books.\textsuperscript{10}

In the case of \textit{Pride and Prejudice and Zombies} Raincoast Books provided full service marketing in the Canadian market as an extension of the originating publisher. Quirk Books supported Raincoast’s marketing by supplying constantly new information about the title and its success as well as with news about plans of similar projects in the future.

In my role as an intern at Raincoast Books I had the opportunity to spend three months in the summer of 2009 in Raincoast’s marketing and publicity department. I attended team meetings, was involved in the implementation of marketing activities, contributed to blog posts about \textit{Pride and Prejudice and Zombies} on Raincoast’s blog, and had, in addition to the connection to the US-publisher Quirk Books, the time and opportunity to observe and interpret the marketing that was done for \textit{Pride and Prejudice and Zombies} by Raincoast.

1.4 The Creation of \textit{Pride and Prejudice and Zombies}

The novel \textit{Pride and Prejudice and Zombies} is a literature mash-up containing eighty-five percent the original text of Jane Austen’s classic novel \textit{Pride and Prejudice}, which was first published in 1813. The remaining fifteen percent are additions by author and film-producer Seth Grahame-Smith, which enrich the plot with a strange plague that has fallen on England and caused a zombie epidemic. In this new version of the novel the main characters are occasionally haunted by zombies and have martial arts skills to defend themselves. The main story remains unaltered, but some elements are adjusted and explained by the presence of the undead.\textsuperscript{11}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{10} Raincoast Books’ official website
\end{flushleft}
The idea for *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* originally came from Quirk Books’ editorial director Jason Rekulak who liked the popular creation of mash-ups online such as re-cut movie trailers on www.youtube.com. He was convinced that the same concept which was successful in other media would also work for books, and he came up with a list of public domain literature and combined it with various monsters. The combination of *Pride and Prejudice* with zombies seemed to him to be the right fit. He suggested the idea to Quirk author Seth Grahame-Smith who liked it as much as Rekulak did and became the author of the book.¹²

### 1.5 *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*’ Position on the Market

Mash-ups have been fairly successful in other media forms and have found a significant audience. The creators, often independent authors, take advantage of the new evolved distribution channel, the Internet, to share their work.

Mash-ups in music are often seen as an expression of consumer dissatisfaction;¹³ the approach is to take mediocre songs and turn them into something worth listening to. Video mash-ups, on the contrary, often combine sequences of several movies to create a new movie trailer, often taking a parodist approach or changing the genre, such as turning a love story into a thriller.

In literature there is a long tradition of creating stories based on the works of famous authors. For example, Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* was adapted in a variety of books, such as in the novel *Mr. Darcy’s Daughters* by Elizabeth Aston or in *Bridget Jones’s Diary* by Helen Fielding.

---

¹² Deahl 2009
¹³ Frere-Jones 2005
However the concept for a publishing company to take a well known classic and turn it into a literature mash-up by adding a new element to the original plot hasn’t been done in comparable form before. It was important for the publisher to use a novel in the public domain and therefore be entitled to legally use the original words of the author without being obliged to obtain permission or pay royalties.
2 P R I D E A N D P R E J U D I C E  
A N D Z O M B I E S’ W O R D O F M O U T H

2.1 Spreading the Word Online

Until a few years ago word of mouth was a phenomenon that companies could hardly track and use for their advantage. It happened in families, friendships, and private spaces and marketing people could only guess about its circulation and effect. While it is still impossible to follow the exact track of word of mouth, the part of it that takes place online, in a public space, has become visible. The Internet offers the opportunity to observe word of mouth and to get insight into its development. Because most contributions online never get deleted, the Internet monitors permanently when and where the news show up. It tells what kind of people talk about the subject and especially in what context they talk about it. Emanuel Rosen summarizes in *The Anatomy of Buzz Revisited* that technology has not changed word of mouth itself, but that it has made it visible.14

In the case of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, the Internet, which allows everybody by using search engines to retrace and interpret conversations, helps us to understand why the book became so successful in such a short amount of time.15 Everybody who was involved in the creation of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* was surprised by its success. Although the initial publication date was set for July 2009,16 the title was first mentioned online and reviewed as early as January of the same year, almost six months ahead of schedule. The early buzz around the title was not planned as a marketing strategy by the publisher but was rather accidentally self-inflicted, in a positive sense, by the unexpected interest in the cover image.

---

15 *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* had been mentioned on more than a thousand websites as early as February 2009, two months before it got published (Deahl 2009).
16 The publication date was switched to April as a reaction to the online buzz.
The cover of the book is illustrated in the style of a classic novel and shows the picture of a young woman looking at the viewer. It is drawn in a similar way as it could have been used for a Jane Austen book. However, the eyes of the woman are bright red in colour, her dress is bloody, and her lower jaw is exposing the bone, all indicating her transformation into a zombie. Quirk Books started with *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* a new series called Quirk Classics and used the series title as well as the design of the book as an allusion to the famous and popular Penguin Classics.

Figure 1, cover image of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, Quirk Books, 2009.

Figure 2, cover image of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, Penguin Classics, 2003.

The image of this cover was included in Quirk Books’ spring 2009 catalogue which was posted in November 2008 on the website of Chronicle Books to announce Quirk Books’ new titles to the industry. In January 2009 a blogger took the cover out of the PDF-catalogue and posted it on a Jane Austen blog. Other bloggers saw it there, picked it up and posted it on blogs such as *Sci-Fi Wire, Topless Robot, Media Bistro, and Jezebel*. 
At the beginning, the book was mentioned and the cover was displayed on a variety of personal blogs and on websites, dealing with books, horror themes or movies. Jane Austen fans, comic fans, and other book readers joined the discussion and in early February already, the book had been mentioned on more than a thousand websites and jumped to a ranking of seventy-two on www.amazon.com. Although the book was not available yet and no official marketing had been done, Quirk Books was confronted with a high interest in the title at their booth at the Comic Con in New York City. People had heard about it online and commented about the viral spread or became interested in the title by seeing the poster.

Since the book was not yet published nobody could actually talk about its content. The word of mouth about *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* emerged not from actual reviews of the book in a traditional sense. The plot of the book was not needed; the idea itself was enough to create a variety of different online discussions.

The first reviewers simply loved the idea. One blogger praised it on February 11th: “It’s zombies and Jane Austen. I absolutely will be buying a copy. In fact, I love it without ever having read a word of it.”

A lot of interest also came from movie fans. The *London Sunday Times* reported on February 8th that Hollywood studios were bidding on the movie rights of the soon to be published title.

One day later the online movie forum www.slashfilm.com, referring to the *Sunday Times* article, described Quirk Books new title and also brought up some former horror movies that were based on classic literature. Moreover, the article came up
with suggestions for the cast of the *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* movie, starring famous actresses like Keira Knightley and Judi Dench and therefore offering more topics to talk about. Forty-three readers commented on the article expressing their excitement or regret of having to wait for two more months before the book would be released.\(^{21}\)

One week later on February 15th a news article on the movie website www.cinemablen\-d.com picked up a rumour that Natalie Portman might be part of the movie adaptation.\(^{22}\) Natalie Portman’s fan website (www.natalieportman.com) reacted with a reference to www.cinemablen\-d.com and added *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* to their list of possible future movies with the popular actress.\(^{23}\)

Another website that adopted the unconfirmed news about Natalie Portman’s possible commitment, also as early as February 15th, was www.imdb.com with the headline ”Pride, Prejudice... And Zombies. And Natalie Portman.”\(^{24}\) *The Internet Movie Database* which belongs to Amazon is available in ten languages and among the fifty most visited websites worldwide, ranked at 41.\(^{25}\) The enormous range and popularity of *The Internet Movie Database* among movie fans certainly helped to spread the word. After February 15th, the online fan community of Natalie Portman unintentionally got to read about *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* while searching for the actress.

Besides simply talking about possible future movie adaptations some fans unable to wait, made their own movie trailers, and presented them on www.youtube.com. One of them features the actress Keira Knightley and takes advantage of the variety of her former movies. It combines, among others, scenes of her 2005 romantic

---

21 Connelly 2009  
22 Rich 2009  
23 Natalie Portman fan website  
24 *The Internet Movie Database* 2009  
movie *Pride and Prejudice* as well as scenes from the horror comedy *Pirates of the Caribbean*, where Knightley fights cursed pirates who turn in the moonlight into undead monsters and therefore are perfectly suited for a reuse in a *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* movie trailer. Similar ideas were realized by other fans and the website www.youtube.com became another channel that fans used to spread the word of mouth.

The publication date seemed to be well chosen for a book about zombies. *Time Magazine* picked up the story on April 9th and announced that “Zombies Are the New Vampires.” The article dealing with several zombie movies that were in production at the time also gave a detailed description about *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* before trying to explain the phenomenon of zombies and why they were suddenly so successful. While the first modern zombie movie *Night of the Living Dead* in 1968 was a criticism of the violence of the Vietnam war, book critic Lev Grossman sees zombies nowadays as reliable “monsters of the people”, that are much closer to us than vampires. He announces zombies as “the official monster of the recession”.

*Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* also brought up in some sources the conclusion that we are all somehow zombies. Initially reported by Canwest’s news service, managing editor of Toronto’s *Rue Morgue Magazine* Dave Alexander recognizes zombies in Wal-Mart shoppers on the hunt for Black Friday deals. The same article was also used by the *Edmonton Journal* and Victoria’s *Times Colonist*, primarily reporting about zombies in general, but also spreading the word about Quirk’s new book.

---


28 Grossman 2009

29 Harris 2009
Another aspect that was talked about was the phenomenon of Jane Austen and why her works are so popular to be reused in other forms. For MacLeans’ Brian Bethune, Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* is the “most adapted novel in history.” *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* therefore gave a good reason to have a look back at the “nine more or less straight-up film and TV versions of Austen’s corrosively funny tale of marriage, money and the five Bennet girls” and to wonder if Seth Grahame-Smith aimed to win more male readers for Austen’s classics by adding blood.

*The Washington Post* came with a similar story about the latest adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*. While the main parts of the article are devoted to *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, it also summarizes similar new projects as, for example, the screenplay *Pride and Predator* in which Jane Austen’s characters have to fight an Alien, the book *Jane Bites Back* by Michael Thomas Ford that turns Jane Austen herself into a Vampire, or *Pride and Prejudice and Dragons*, a fan work that is available on www.fanfiction.net. For Susan Allen Ford, the editor of the Jane Austen magazine *Persuasions* it is “the completeness of Austen’s characters [...] what allows them to be transported successfully to a variety of settings.”

As for the word of mouth around *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, it was certainly beneficial for it to be published as the first one of a number of new remixes of Jane Austen titles in combination with monsters.

Soon after the book had been released the fan community started to discuss what similar books might follow this new trend. On April 7th a blogger suggested the titles “Fey in Mansfield Park [...] Werewolves in Northanger Abbey” and ”A kelpie in Persuasion.” Bloggers and media had found an amusing new addition to their articles – finding creative new titles for future literature mash-ups.

---

30 Bethune 2009  
31 Hesse 2009  
32 Courtney 2009
Seth Grahame-Smith was already one step ahead and had announced his next book as *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*.33

What was extraordinary about the word of mouth around *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* was that the book's content was secondary, especially in the months preceding its publication. Since no one had read the book, there were no traditional reviews online or in any media. Whether the book was well written or if the zombie parts were merged successfully with the original Austen text was of no interest. Simply the idea, the title and the cover image inspired bloggers and fans of the genre to spread the word about a variety of different topics that centered on *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*.

Emanuel Rosen explains in his word of mouth exploration *The Anatomy of Buzz* the principle of “homophily.”34 People tend to socialize with others that are similar to themselves and build networks with related interests. While word of mouth spreads easily within those clusters it often has difficulties to reach other social groups with different interests and habits.

One of the strengths that helped the viral spread of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* was that a variety of groups with different interests were intrigued by the idea and talked about the title. As a book it appealed to book readers, and with Jane Austen as one of the authors, especially caught the interest of Austen fans. The sale of the movie rights reached into the movie community and the zombie aspect fascinated friends of horror genres. Appealing to different groups of people that were not necessarily connected made it easier for the word of mouth to spread faster and in larger circles.

---

33 CBC News 2009
2.2 Pride and Prejudice and Zombies Reviews

Influenced by its huge word of mouth success _Pride and Prejudice and Zombies_ got a high number of reviews on blogs as well as in print and online media. At the beginning of June it was title number four on the _New York Times_ paperback trade fiction bestseller list and had been on the list for nine weeks. Andy Sernovitz, the author of _Word-of-mouth marketing_, identifies bestseller lists as passive word of mouth. The ranking represents a certain amount of buyers who unknowingly spread the word by buying the book and therefore help it to get on the list, to get published and to get noticed by a high number of possible new readers.

The authors of the reviews often were caught in conflicting feelings about it. The online book journal, _January Magazine_, described it very simply, quoting the text of the book cover: "Get this: 'Pride and Prejudice and Zombies features the original text of Jane Austen’s beloved novel with all-new scenes of bone-crunching zombie action.' I really just can’t think of anything more to say." Many reviewers saw the new approach as positive. Blogcritic’s writer Jordan Richardson explained that “Grahame-Smith almost immaculately integrates the horrifying bone-crunching nature of zombies into Austen’s comedy of etiquette.” Ian Goodwillie, writer at the Canadian media and pop culture magazine _Popjournalism_, described it as a book that brought readers closer to the original Jane Austen (“I got something that made me re-examine a classic and appreciate it on a different level.”).

_Pride and Prejudice and Zombies_ even found supporters among Jane Austen fans. _USA Today_ quotes an email from Marsha Huff, president of Jane Austen Society of North

---

35 New York Times 2009
36 Sernovitz, _Word-of-mouth marketing_, 148.
37 Richards 2009
38 Richardson 2009
39 Goodwillie 2009
America, admitting that many of their members find the new book intriguing. The website www.austenpride.com values *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* with a positive review. Although wondering if Jane Austen would roll in her grave out of laughter or out of anger, the author of the review confirms that “many [...] still-living Austen fans think this unholy marriage of highbrow literature and lowbrow humor is a great bit of fun.”

A review in *The Washington Post* explains that for Jane Austen fans the fascination about the book is not in the additions by Seth Grahame-Smith. What makes the book worth reading is that the new parts emphasize the humour that already exists in Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*. The reviewer explains that “Reading ‘Zombies’ means discovering that half of the things you’re laughing about were written 200 years ago by Austen herself.”

However not everybody who talked about the book liked it. The reviews on Amazon range almost equally from one star (“It’s just not good.”) to five stars (“This book is awesome!”) and show a variety of opinions.

A review on the movie website www.cinematical.com expressed disappointment about the realization of the book, although the idea was promising. The Canadian news magazine *MacLeans* makes the observation that zombie fans are harder to please than Austen fans and quotes writer Cory Doctorow who criticizes too much original Austen content in relation to zombies. *Vanguard*, Portland State University’s student run newspaper, hardly finds a positive aspect about *Pride and

---

40 USA Today 2009
41 Ginger 2009
42 Hesse 2009
43 Amazon Canada, customer reviews of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, http://www.amazon.ca/product-reviews/1594743347/ref=cm_cr_dp_all helpfuFie=UTF8&colid=&showViewpoints=1&colid=&sortBy=bySubmission DateDescending (accessed October 5, 2009)
44 Rappe 2009
45 Bethune 2009
Prejudice and Zombies. The author criticizes that the same joke is stretched over the whole book, misses the social commentary that was an important part of Austen’s version, and describes the additions by Seth-Grahame Smith as the “most boring zombie scenes I’ve ever read.”

The New Yorker’s literature blog is likely the most prominent example of a bad review about Pride and Prejudice and Zombies that also got quoted by other media, such as MacLeans in Canada, and spread negative word of mouth. The reviewer explores the fascination about Jane Austen mash-ups and summarizes the book with the memorable line: “eighty-five per cent Austen, fifteen per cent a television writer named Seth Grahame-Smith, and one hundred per cent terrible.” He describes the experience of reading Pride and Prejudice and Zombies “like taking a walk in a park on a beautiful day and knowing that a thunderstorm or something else deeply unpleasant (say, a zombie) might spring up at any moment and ruin everything.”

However, even bad reviews are not necessarily bad for the success of a book. A survey from 2004 by Alan T. Sorensen and Scott J. Rasmussen comes to the conclusion that for books any kind of publicity is good publicity. Because of the high number of published titles each year, book reviews rather inform readers about the existence and the content of a new book than about its quality. Although positive reviews have a stronger impact, even negative reviews lead to an increase in book sales.

The success of Pride and Prejudice and Zombies indicates that the content of the book and its quality as well as the tone and the topic of the reviews were secondary and did not influence the spread of the word of mouth. It was not important whether the bloggers and journalists recommended it or if they tore it apart, if they talked

---

46 Hutchins 2009  
47 Halford 2009  
48 Sorensen 2004
about Jane Austen from a literary point of view or about possible actors that might participate in a movie adaptation. In all cases they displayed the cover on blogs, in newspapers, magazines, or on their websites, and described enough of the book to make their readers remember it. Readers most likely didn’t remember the details of the article, but they remembered the idea and the title.

Sernovitz describes that one technique for successful word of mouth and getting people talking about you is trying to make them smile. In many cases this concept worked for *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* since it was simply the idea and the title which caused readers who heard about it and liked it to pick the story up and spread the word.

Chip and Dan Heath explain in their marketing book *Made to Stick* that our brains are trained to look for new and unexpected things. Their recommendation is to “violate people’s expectations”, to surprise them and get their attention, and afterwards get them interested in order to keep their attention. For *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* the unexpected title itself, combining the well-known name of a classic romantic novel with something as conflictive as zombies, worked as a method of getting attention. The discussions that followed about monsters, books, and movies were capable of keeping the interest.

In summary it is possible to say that the success of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* is owed to the quick and unexpected spread of word of mouth. Without the buzz that was produced by bloggers and the sudden interest in the title it would have taken much longer for traditional newspapers to report about it. As is common practice in the industry and usually desired by publishing companies, media would have waited to review the book until it was available in stores and readers who heard about it could actually purchase it.

50 Heath, *Made to Stick*, 16.
The initial success therefore is owed to bloggers, who could reach a far wider audience than their personal environment, as well as to online forums, dedicated to books and movies, who acted as a meeting point for many people with the same interest.
3 MARKETING ANALYSIS OF
P R I D E  A N D  P R E J U D I C E  A N D  Z O M B I E S

3.1 Marketing and Publicity

Word of mouth can be classified in two different categories: amplified word of
mouth and organic word of mouth. Amplified word of mouth is usually initiated
by a company’s marketing campaign while organic word of mouth evolves naturally
from the qualities of a company or from a notable product. In the case of Pride
and Prejudice and Zombies the start of the word of mouth development was organic,
caused by the surprise and excitement that customers felt hearing for the first time
about the new mash-up idea of zombies with the well known title Pride and Prejudice.

However, although organic word of mouth can be a promising beginning, there is
more effort required to make a product successful in the long run. In The Anatomy of
Buzz Emanuel Rosen explains the concept of creating successful word of mouth in
simply two steps - having a contagious product and accelerating the natural conta-
gion. A contagious product was available with Pride and Prejudice and Zombies but in
order to make the most out of the viral spread it was important for Quirk Books to
initiate the right marketing to support the word of mouth development.

At the beginning, before the viral spread became evident, only very basic marketing
activities were planned. Merely one person in the company was responsible for the
marketing and publicity of Pride and Prejudice and Zombies and the initial market-
ing budget was zero dollars. Since Quirk Books was not sure how to estimate the
potential of the book to find a large readership, their marketing campaign included
only scheduled galley mailings, and adding the book to their catalogue and posting
it on their website (www.irreference.com).

51 Sernovitz, Word-of-mouth marketing, 6.
52 Rosen, The anatomy of buzz, 119.
Quirk Books discovered in January 2009 that there was more enthusiasm for *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* than they had expected and reacted with the fast initiation of additional marketing activities.

According to Sernovitz there are three reasons that people talk about you: the quality of your product, feeling good about being a user of the product, and feeling connected to other users.\(^{53}\) In order to keep the discussions going it was therefore important for Quirk’s marketing to give people a positive feeling about the book and to connect them with other readers. Marketing activities such as skype events, book tours, giving away free copies, video postings on YouTube, an online ad campaign and media interviews were initiated and Facebook and Twitter were used as tools to spread the word. The marketing budget rose from zero dollars to between fifty and seventy-five thousand dollars.

Marketing literature distinguishes between two kinds of marketing: a strong theory of marketing and a weak theory of marketing. While the strong theory assumes that marketing can change the customer’s behaviour and influence the purchase decision, the weak theory sees marketing simply as a tool to increase the knowledge about a product.\(^{54}\) The marketing for *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* was an example of the weak theory of marketing. It relied on the idea of the book itself to eventually make people buy it and therefore was meant primarily to increase its publicity. Unique about this aspect of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*’ marketing effort was that Quirk Books did not have to create a demand for the title.

The whole supply chain was involved in watching the online developments. Quirk books was tracking the market with tools such as Google Alerts, the media monitoring service Burrelles Luce, and Twitter search and kept updating their partners.\(^{55}\)

---

54 Hofmeyr, *Commitment-led marketing*, 168.
55 Cohen 2009
But book reps, librarians, and booksellers too had noticed the interest and warned that it might become a bigger title than expected. Due to the cooperation within the supply chain and the constant monitoring of all activities it was possible for the publisher to react and to adjust the marketing.

The following chapters will take a closer look at the marketing activities initiated by Quirk Books and Raincoast Books and examine in detail how it supported the spread of word of mouth.

3.1.1 Industry-Oriented Marketing
The marketing that was done by Quirk Books and by Raincoast Books towards booksellers to make the title known in the book industry was primarily traditional supply chain marketing. The intention was less the support of word of mouth and more the principle to make everybody involved in the process aware of the viral online success and therefore to supply stores with a sufficient amount of books to satisfy the demand and not to lose sales.

The publisher’s sales reps received regular updates about the ongoing interest in the book title even before it was published and prepared their clients to be ready for the expected success. Booksellers had the opportunity to get free cardboard displays to present the book with the order of eight copies or to receive posters. In preparation for the announcement of the Quirk Classic follow-up title, bookstores got a special poster to be used for holding their own internal contests for guessing the next title. It was announced by Quirk to follow the book *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* as another mash-up of classic literature combined with monsters. Quirk Books was also present and promoted the title at important industry events such as the New York City Comic Con in February of 2009 and editor Jason Rekulak participated in May on a panel at the Book Expo America discussing the new genre of monster literature.
The success of word of mouth however was created by the customers and the 
marketing reaction by the publisher therefore focused on supporting the initial 
activators and increasing the demand among customers rather than trying to 
approach the marketing artificially from the side of the supply chain. The demand 
for the book itself generated enthusiasm and booksellers and librarians promoted 
it independently. Neither Quirk Books nor Raincoast Books needed to support the 
title within the industry.

3.1.2 Media- and Blogger-Oriented Marketing
The world of media has changed. While information used to be distributed to a 
large audience by a comparably small number of media such as newspapers, maga-
azines, radio and TV stations, the media landscape has changed significantly in the 
last ten years. Setting up a blog to publish information can be done within minutes 
and although it takes longer to get a noteworthy number of readers, the concept of a 
media user simply as a consumer doesn’t exist anymore. It has never been easier for 
readers to pick up news, distribute them to a new audience and in turn become an 
independent source of information.

In the case of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* it was one blogger who started the 
word of mouth, accidentally coming across Quirk Book’s PDF catalogue online and 
taking out the cover image of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. The successive spread 
was owed to the large number of fans and communities around books, movies, 
zombies, and Jane Austen literature. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* itself therefore is 
the best example of how a large number of small blogs can make a difference when 
the news has the potential to become viral.

For publishers this development changes the way their marketing has to be 
approached. Standards in addressing media have been developed over a long time.

---

56 Bradshaw 2008
The challenge nowadays is not to use the same methods for the conversation with bloggers.

The blogosphere is as different as the people in it and therefore it is hard to set universal rules on how to approach bloggers. However, some basic principles can be followed to avoid bad word of mouth. The main difference between bloggers and professional media is that bloggers usually are private individuals that are only accountable to themselves. In order to be respected and heard it is mandatory to be part of their community.\textsuperscript{57} Bloggers don’t want to feel used and will not repeat a company’s marketing message, but they respect other bloggers and are interested in talking about new and exciting topics – after all that is usually the reason they started their blog.

Online tools like www.technorati.com can help publishers to find current discussions on blogs, get involved and show appreciation for the fact that people are interested in their product. By keeping in touch with key bloggers and offering new information, publishers can build reliable relationships and make it more likely that bloggers will spread positive word of mouth.

In February 2009 Quirk Books initiated a blog outreach campaign offering selected bloggers free copies of \textit{Pride and Prejudice and Zombies} as giveaways.\textsuperscript{58} The campaign helped to bring books to readers who already had an interested audience, were known as talkers in their community, and were thankful for getting the book for free. A good way to create positive word of mouth is by making bloggers feel special.\textsuperscript{59} The addressed bloggers probably felt respected, uplifted to the status of insiders, and therefore were likely to spread the word about \textit{Pride and Prejudice and Zombies} on their blogs.

\textsuperscript{57} Sernovitz, \textit{Word-of-mouth marketing}, 137.
\textsuperscript{58} Cohen 2009
\textsuperscript{59} Sernovitz, \textit{Word-of-mouth marketing}, 85.
However, the increase in marketing towards bloggers has not made the marketing towards mainstream media redundant. For Quirk Books it is still a high priority to promote their books to newspapers and magazines, although a sharp decline in the number of reviewed books in newspapers has made it harder for publishers to get new titles reviewed.

To be noticed in today’s competitive market situation a book has to be presented in a creative and outstanding way. Raincoast Books was successful in getting *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* on the Canadian *Globe and Mail* blog entirely because of the way they presented it. *The Globe and Mail*’s blogger about books and publishing, Martin Levin, would never have reviewed it and even confessed that he is “very unlikely to read it.” The way it was presented however made him take the unusual step of opening the package live on his blog.

![Figure 3, media package of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, Raincoast Books.](image)

---

The brown packaging paper showed a bloody handprint and the strings around it were stained with blood. Above the handprint it read:

My dearest Elizabeth,

Please open this package in secrecy.

Yours forever ... or maybe not.

Mr. Darcy

The mentioned names were enough hints to make him draw the connection to Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* and the blood made him guess that the content is either a murder mystery or a thriller. It was enough mystery to catch his attention, to make him unpack it live while describing his first impressions and even to quote the first sentence of the book.61

From a publicity point of view the book got all the attention that was needed to spread the word, even from a source that was very unlikely to review it. The Blogger didn’t make a recommendation to read or not to read *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. But he picked up the cleverly prepared opportunity to talk about it and therefore helped to spread the word.

The Internet was important for the latest rise of word of mouth. Nevertheless, according to Emanuel Rosen’s *The Anatomy of Buzz Revisited*, seventy-four percent of comments about products are transmitted face-to-face, seventeen percent over the phone, and only nine percent online.62 Although online tools can trigger word of mouth that starts on the Internet but then also spreads to the offline world63 there still is a high percentage of word of mouth that is entirely unrelated to new

---

61 Levin 2009
technologies. It is therefore advisable to support both channels, online and offline, in order to spread the information as widely as possible.

Quirk Books also used traditional ways to promote their book in the USA. In December 2008 they sent out long-lead publicity mailings to several media. At the end of February 2009 smaller bloggers were among the first to be informed about the new book. Short-lead mailings to TV followed in the middle of March 2009 as well as radio, web, and print mailings. Mailings to college newspapers followed in late March.\textsuperscript{64} Raincoast Books promoted the book in the meantime with publicity mailings to bloggers, print media, and online media in Canada.

\subsection{Customer-Oriented Marketing}

There are plenty of definitions that can describe the concept of marketing from different angles. The Chartered Institute of Marketing specifies marketing as “The management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably.”\textsuperscript{65} Word of mouth is only one aspect of marketing, but it is a highly complex one. It is hard to plan and nearly impossible to control since its result relies on the customer’s activity in spreading the word instead of the company’s marketing efforts. One difficulty defining word-of-mouth marketing is the word \emph{profitably}. While it is unquestionable that word of mouth can also lead to financial profit, it is hard to quantify the success of word-of-mouth marketing activities. Nevertheless the general terms \emph{identifying, anticipating, and satisfying customer requirements} apply for word-of-mouth marketing in the publishing industry as well. Publishers have to identify the communities where possible talkers meet, the kind of people they are and the topics they talk about. They have to watch and anticipate why they talk about the subject and what motivates them and furthermore the marketing strategy has to take steps to satisfy the consumer’s requirements—but not necessarily requirements in a physical sense. In many cases the talkers demand

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item[64] Cohen 2009
  \item[65] The Chartered Institute of Marketing
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
support in what they are doing: talking about a subject or product. A word-of-mouth marketing strategy therefore often can meet those requirements simply by supplying new information.\textsuperscript{66}

In a more practical approach word-of-mouth marketing can also be defined as joining the “conversation that consumers are having every day with other consumers.”\textsuperscript{67} For marketers this means that in order to implement the rules of general marketing it is important to get personally involved.

The involvement however has to happen with the right intention or it might turn quickly into negative responses which can harm the marketer’s attempt. What word-of-mouth marketing cannot do is frankly promote a marketing idea and directly trying to convince consumers to make a purchase decision. It is about honestly joining the discussion and therefore it only works if the company is enthusiastic about the product and believes in its uniqueness as well. Indispensable are also independent talkers who are eager to discuss all aspects of the product for the same reason: because they love it and want others to know about it and to get excited too.

Word-of-mouth marketing therefore not only has to work as a dialogue between marketer and consumer, it also has to support the dialogue between consumers as the basis of viral development. For this reason it is also described as the “art and science of building active, mutually beneficial consumer-to-consumer and consumer-to-marketer communications.”\textsuperscript{68}

Book publishers’ communication directly with the end customer is significantly more important than it was a few years ago. It is not necessarily only the publisher’s prerogative to decide what titles get above average attention in marketing and

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
    \item[66] Sernovitz, \textit{Word-of-mouth marketing}, 83.
    \item[67] Sernovitz, \textit{Word-of-mouth marketing}, XX.
    \item[68] Sernovitz, \textit{Word-of-mouth marketing}, 3.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
publicity anymore. It also is no longer solely the media’s function to review certain titles and make them bestsellers by introducing them to a large readership. While the flow of information used to start at the publishers and media companies and ended at the customer, the system has changed. Customers can much easier than ever before change the direction by picking up a title and promoting it themselves. For publishers this development makes the conversation with customers considerably more important as it is the only opportunity to be aware of the market situation, to plan future print runs and new titles, and to prevent being surprised by a book’s success or its failure.

3.1.3a A Publisher’s Online Presence

In order to start a conversation with customers one of the obvious things to do is to be easy to find, by following criteria of search engine optimization, and maintaining a website that attracts readers by providing relevant content. Interested customers who search online for a book title and get forwarded to a publisher’s website can be satisfied best if they quickly find what they are looking for and if the website makes it easy for them to act. One strategy is to offer basic information about the book such as bibliographic data, a description of the content, specifications, retail price, and information about the author. However in order to support word of mouth there is more that can be done. Online users are accustomed to simple actions when they are surfing the web. Each new click is an obstacle and may divert the user’s attention to something else. The publisher’s website therefore should make it as easy as possible to spread the word by placing the right tools prominently on the page and allow actions with the least possible number of clicks.

Raincoast Books addressed those issues by displaying links to purchase Pride and Prejudice and Zombies right next to the description and the cover image. Next to the links to Amazon, Chapters Indigo, and to independent booksellers where the title can be purchased, the website offers a button to easily print the page. Important for

69 Rosen, Anatomy of Buzz, 97.
the word of mouth is a menu that opens when the user scrolls over it and which allows a variety of more than one hundred and fifty activities to spread the word. Most prominently displayed are tools to share the information on Facebook or Myspace, to send them via email to a friend, or to insert them to Twitter.

Quirk Books’ website leads the interested customer who wants to purchase a print copy of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* to Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Borders, local independent bookstores or makes it possible to buy the book directly on the publisher’s website (www.irreference.com). Moreover the website offers the book in Kindle, E-Reader, and Audio versions.

However, Quirks’s website also offers opportunities for customers who are not sure yet if they want to get the book or for fans who are simply searching for more information. It follows the rule that you can get “deeper and more relevant discussions”  by providing high quality content to talk about. The first three chapters of the book can be downloaded, read and shared for free. Illustrations are available in printable quality and hyperlinks lead to media reviews and reader comments about the book. For more information the customers can follow the links to the two Facebook groups: *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* and Quirk Classics.

The Quirk website offers a small library of opportunities for fans to get additional material about the book. These things are easy to share with friends and are more interesting and valuable than a simple description of the content. Therefore the website prevents interested customers from quickly losing the interest in the page and offers opportunities to proceed by spreading the word.

Blogs and their ability to provide constantly new topics and ideas as well as in their role as a platform where discussions can take place are a useful tool to support word

---

of mouth. Few titles will contain a sufficient amount of information to maintain a blog that exclusively covers the one book and comes up with interesting news over a longer period of time. However, for publishers a blog can be a useful tool to cover their whole list and provide information about new books and authors. While maintaining a successful blog demands attention, consistency, and a lot of time, it is on the other hand an easy and affordable tool to inform customers, booksellers, and other publishers. For the support of word of mouth a well done blog is one opportunity more for publishers to give talkers new information.

In order to attract readers in the information overloaded online world it is necessary to update the blog frequently and to provide content of good quality. Raincoast Books maintains a blog at http://blogs.raincoast.com/ which is usually updated on a daily basis. Several people in the marketing department are blogging regularly, which divides the workload onto more than one shoulder and makes the blog sustainable. The information provided mainly covers new books and features inside illustrations, information about author tours, the description of similar titles, stories about book launches or about events that can be connected to the titles. Blogs are also a good platform to embed videos with author interviews and to share book trailers or YouTube videos that are connected to the content of the books.

While the discussion about the title was going on and more and more monster mash-ups were announced, Raincoast Books initiated a competition between their company and Harper Collins Canada about the question of who would win a fight between zombies and vampires. On a blog that was set up under the name (Un)Death Match Raincoast Books as the Canadian representative of Pride and Prejudice and Zombies took the position of zombies while Harper Collins in their position as publisher of Guillermo Del Toro’s and Chuck Hogan’s The Strain supported the case for vampires. Readers were asked to vote for vampires or zombies while the publisher and distributor posted materials, from book reviews to movie trailers or YouTube videos that are connected to the content of the books.

---

71 Sernovitz, Word-of-mouth marketing, 136.
trailers, to make their case and verbalized in extensive statements why vampires or zombies are superior in their opinion.\textsuperscript{72}

Considering the high number of competing websites it is unlikely that even very good content on a publisher’s website or blog can attract an extraordinarily high number of readers. Nevertheless, those platforms can be useful tools that provide talkers with information and therefore are important for the development of word of mouth.

Malcolm Gladwell explains in \textit{The Tipping Point}, a book about the drivers of word of mouth, that a very small number of people are crucial for the start of a viral development. He calls his theory “The Law of the Few.”\textsuperscript{73} Those people are more social, have bigger networks of personal contacts, are more enthusiastic, and the way they collect information make them key figures in the initial spread of word of mouth. They have a high interest in new information and a publisher’s website can be the most obvious and therefore the first contact point. The role of those few important key figures in the viral development of word of mouth allows the conclusion that even if the information on the website is not directly seen by a large readership, the information might nevertheless get distributed to fans over other blogs, websites, forums or through face to face word of mouth.

Publisher’s websites and blogs are easily accessible platforms to spread word of mouth that should be cultivated. Attracting customers to visit a website however is difficult and requires constant activity. Consumers will hardly change their online behaviour on the long run for a new book title. More promising to build a conversation with customers therefore is to look for target groups and find the communities where they meet and talk about their interests.\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{73} Gladwell, \textit{The Tipping Point}, 30.  
\textsuperscript{74} Rosen, \textit{Anatomy of Buzz}, 23/24.
3.1.3b Conversations with Customers

One way to support word of mouth online is to remove obstacles and to make it as easy as possible for people who come across a product to pass on the information. To bring the content to the communities and to the platforms they use frequently makes interaction much easier. Customers don’t have to change their behaviour, don’t have to search for new ways or even sign in and get another password protected online account before they can comment. They know the environment and therefore are more comfortable to get active and to share information with other members of their community.

After communities of people who want to talk about a book have been located, publishers can start to work with them. Depending on the community it can be enough to provide new information to keep a discussion going. In other cases it might be necessary to offer a new platform, lead a conversation, or to give the member’s ideas a new audience.75

Not all communities have overlapping members who are active in several communities and connect them with each other. To spread word of mouth it is therefore important to deliver information initially to a variety of communities and platforms. This way the continuation of the spread doesn’t solely depend on connectors between the groups. It becomes possible that the information gets picked up by people with varying interests on different starting points and therefore is more likely to reach a broader spectrum of people.76

In the case of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* this phenomenon was used, for example, by bookstores. Selling the title in the juvenile as well as in the adult section reached into different age groups and gave the word of mouth various starting points. Following a similar idea Raincoast Books pursued the strategy to have the

book listed as Non Fiction on Booknet Canada, while the Globe and Mail listed it as Fiction.\textsuperscript{77} Thereby \textit{Pride and Prejudice and Zombies} appeared in two categories on different bestsellerlists and was seen by more readers.

The marketing on blogs and in social media served the same reason and offered a variety of opportunities for the publisher to make different groups of people interested in the book.

For \textit{Pride and Prejudice and Zombies} marketing in social media started fairly early in February 2009 when a \textit{Pride and Prejudice and Zombies} fan page was launched on Facebook by the author Seth Grahame-Smith as a hub for conversation. This step had not been planned initially but was a reaction to the ongoing online enthusiasm about the title.

Creating a fan page on Facebook is free and can be done within minutes. On http://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php the marketer merely has to choose a category, if the page is for example for a company, product or a famous person, and confirm to be an official representative. The difficult part after the creation is to get Facebook users to become fans of the page, to create interactivity among users, and to make the group grow.

Next to the fan page of \textit{Pride and Prejudice and Zombies} the users can also join a Quirk Classics and a Quirk Books page. Facebook’s statistics show\textsuperscript{78} that it is easier for publishers to get people join a group for a specific title than as fans for their company. In spite of that Quirk Books managed to achieve a constant growth in their Facebook groups. In June 2009 the Quirk Books fan page counted 360 fans while the \textit{Pride and Prejudice and Zombies} fan page already had more than 5,000. People don’t identify with a publishing house as much as they do with a book. Nevertheless

\textsuperscript{77} Broadhurst, Jamie, e-mail message to author on December 09, 2009.
\textsuperscript{78} Cohen 2009
the success and the increasing publicity also lead to rising numbers for Quirk Books general Facebook page. Two months later, in August 2009, the Quirk Books fan page had almost doubled with 657 fans while the *Pride and Prejudice* and Zombie crowd counted 6,475.

Notable is the interest in the Quirk Classics fan page. The number of fans increased from 359 members in June to 982 members in August. The series Quirk Classics was started by Quirk Books with the launch of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* as the first Quirk Classic title. In September 2009 the second title followed with *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters*. For the first months however there was only one Quirk Classic title on the market. Nevertheless the publisher managed to build a fan group in addition to the *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* page and made the membership almost triple within two months before the launch of the second Quirk Classic title.

### 3.1.3c Keeping the Conversation Going

What did Quirk Books do to keep the interest in the title going and to keep people active in the fan pages?

For word-of-mouth marketing it is important to lead people and to make it simple for them to get involved. Quirk Books managed to guide people by always supplying new information, stimulating discussions, and by keeping the topics interesting for the group members. Fans often want to be among the first ones to hear the news and want to know more about it than the average person. If they do, they will readily share the information with friends, which makes them appear to be insiders in their peer group.

For Quirk Books one way to keep the talk going was to share content with interested customers. They provided the first three chapters of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* as

---

a free download and made it public to fans on their social networks. Readers could get more information about the actual book and pass it on.

The idea of sharing parts of a book for marketing purposes is not new. Book excerpts in magazines have been used before the Internet for the same reasons and have helped to make books famous. The difference is that on the Internet the sharing process became easier and that readers can forward the content in basically no time and without any costs to a high number of contacts. While some publishers might fear losing control over their content too fast, in terms of online word-of-mouth marketing, the intention is indeed to lose control over the content provided and therefore to reach a high number of people and to trigger an ongoing conversation. Quirk Books added more material to be shared with the successive release of two inside illustrations (figure 4) of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*.

![Figure 4, inside illustrations of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, paperback edition, Quirk Books, 2009](image)

While the content itself was published on Quirk Books’ website the social media tools were used to make the release known to a wider circle. They are not tools to directly give away free things but rather to inform fans about where they can get the latest developments. Everything that was published and mentioned on Facebook
could have been accessed from other sources as well. The Facebook fan page however was a place where all information was collected and this made it easy for fans to follow the news at a single well known source that they visited frequently.

A variety of other information kept the discussions on the *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* fan page interesting. For example, the author Seth Grahame-Smith used a combination of book related, personal, and general topics for his Facebook posts to maintain a conversation with the group members and often managed to get a high number of comments.

One part of the updates was related to the book *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. Seth Grahame-Smith mentioned news about his book tour,81 announced that a video of him talking in a bookstore was available on www.youtube.com, or informed the community about media hits such as Oprah Winfrey recommending *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* as one of the top books to read in the summer of 2009.82 When the book appeared in a scene of the popular TV show *Heroes*, the fans knew about it one day before it was broadcasted.83 The group members also got the latest information about the *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies Deluxe Heirloom Edition* which was announced for November 2009, saw pictures of how a bookstore in Amsterdam presented the book by devoting the whole shop window to its presentation,84 and were updated with performance numbers of the title on different bestseller lists as well as sales and print numbers.85

82  Medwick 2009
Moreover the posts presented news about the Quirk Classic follow-up title *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters*86 and Seth Grahame Smith used the platform to inform the readers about the developing status of his upcoming book *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*.87

The two different aspects of the book, Jane Austen literature and zombies, also offered the opportunity to please each of the fan groups with general information about the subjects. The supporters of zombies in particular could be satisfied easily with the latest news about monster mash-ups or with dates and pictures of zombie walks that were quite in fashion among zombie fans.

By being part of the Facebook group it was possible for fans of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* always to be one step ahead with the latest news around the title and having plenty of information to talk about.

3.1.3d Being a Part of the Fans’ Life

Malcolm Gladwell explains in *The Tipping Point* how essential it is to make a word of mouth message “sticky”.88 By this he means to add something to the message that promotes news from the point of being exciting but not memorable, to a status where the information has the potential to be remembered and to get passed on. As a method to achieve this he recommends including additional information that connects the news to the personal life of the word of mouth recipient and by that make it more relevant and memorable for the individual person.

Besides the topics that were directly related to *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* Seth Grahame-Smith used the Facebook platform for personal updates and therefore

---
88 Gladwell, *The Tipping Point*, 98.
gave his posts a personal touch and created a relation with fans of his book. He managed to make the *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* Facebook group a part of the group members’ life by not focusing solely on the book itself. Some messages made the members active by asking for their opinion or their help. In one case for example, Seth Grahame-Smith asked for “non-abrasive, atmospheric writing music” to help him with writing his next book and got sixty-six comments and suggestions from the group members. 89

Other simple questions such as “What’s everybody doing for the long weekend [...]? I’ll start: sitting in my boxers, writing.”90 lead to a high involvement and allowed the fans to be an active part of the group and therefore feel a closer connection to the book as well.

The Facebook group also took advantage of current events in the public sphere that happened during the time and that presumably emotionally affected a large number of group members. When Michael Jackson died on June 25th 2009 the *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* Facebook group reacted to the worldwide mourning by posting a picture and a reference to Jackson’s famous *Thriller* music video,91 which features zombies and therefore was of interest to the members from two different sides. On one hand they shared the shock about the sudden death of one of the most exceptional musicians of all time with whose music many members grew up with. On the other hand they were connected by their fascination about zombies. More than fifty group members reacted to the post and expressed their feelings. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* offered a platform to talk about something that its fans wanted to talk

PrideandPrejudiceandZombies=v=feed&story_fbid=125821977763
about. Although it was not directly related to the book, posting the Thriller video at the moment when everybody’s thoughts were with Michael Jackson connected the Facebook group to the personal life of the group members.

Something similar happened after Patrick Swayze’s death. Although there was even less connection to zombies or to the book the Facebook group posting “R.I.P. Johnny Castle...”92 offered members a platform to talk about their memories and feelings around the actor and his most famous movie Dirty Dancing. 93

Even though not all postings were directly promoting the book Pride and Prejudice and Zombies they managed to keep people interested and active. The Facebook group did not give the impression of simply wanting to promote a book title. Instead the variety of content attracted different members to participate in the discussions and also changed the way the posts about the book were seen. By making people interact the operators managed to give the messages more the status of recommendations shared by a friend than the impression of plain marketing messages by a company.

### 3.1.3e Making fans active

The willingness to comment on blog posts is one simple kind of interaction that can be influenced by publishers. In order to make readers more active participants in the creation of the content, the blogs can for example be used to hold contests.

In the middle of June 2009 Raincoast Books offered a signed copy of the Pride and Prejudice and Zombies Deluxe Heirloom Edition, which was announced to be published in November 2009 as a top-quality hardcover version of the book, and a poster of Pride and Prejudice and Zombies to the reader who was the closest in guessing the second Quirk Classics’ title which was not yet released at that time. 94

---

93  Johnny Castle is the name of Patrick Swayze’s character in the 1987 movie Dirty Dancing.
94  Johnson 2009
started online by fans and media months before already was channelled onto a new platform and allowed fans to make their ideas and creativity public. Readers posted their suggestions and what matters even more from a publicity point of view, they talked about it to their friends or mentioned it on Twitter and brought more people to Raincoast’s blog.

Getting people to act and giving them a platform to show their enthusiasm in a creative way can even be more promising for word of mouth than merely providing news to interested talkers.

Quirk Books made a LOL95 Zombie contest on Facebook in June 2009 and asked people to send a picture of their “own adorable, undead creation” 96 of a zombie to be able to win a signed copy of the book or an iPod Shuffle with the Pride and Prejudice and Zombies audio book. A selection of the received pictures got displayed on the Facebook fan page and on June 26th the winner was announced.97

During the weeks of the ongoing contest the Facebook group members were active in either creating their own LOL zombies or in enjoying and commenting on the work of other fans. The contest therefore was a success in creating commitment among the community and in keeping the buzz alive.

Apart from posting information and giving fans a platform to talk Facebook offers other opportunities to involve users. Currently there are more than 350,000 platform applications available on Facebook and every month they get used by more

---

95 “LOL” is an abbreviation for “laughing out loud” and is used online to express laughter, that a statement is meant as a joke, or in the context “LOLcats” for funny pictures of cats (www.lolcats.com).
97 The jury selected the picture of a white plastic pony that the winner had elaborately painted and transformed into a zombie pony. (Facebook Pride and Prejudice and Zombies fan page posting, June 26, 2009, http://sk-sk.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=121006693824)
than seventy percent of Facebook members. Quizzes is an application that has become very popular. The way it works is simple. Usually the participant answers a small number of multiple choice questions from which the application will draw some conclusions about the user or compare him to a famous character. The quizzes goes from analysing the list of friends someone has, or telling the user how much money he will earn in his life, up to comparing the answers to movies and declaring which Disney character represents the user the best.

One quiz revealed to its users what *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* character they are. It was announced on the *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* Facebook fan page on June 17th with the following proclamation: “Find out which one of the 10 beloved (and 1 not so beloved) characters you are from *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*! Questions will revolve around your zombie-fighting skills, your penchant for pastry and / or your spinsterhood. Take the quiz!! Explode some brains with your foot…” Although the results were predictable concerning the questions that had to be answered, it was still used by fans to find out if they resemble Elizabeth Bennett, a zombie, or one of the other main characters of the novel.

This kind of application asks the Facebook user after having taken the quiz if he wants to post the result on his page and to inform friends about it. Although certainly not all users agree to that, the whole concept of Facebook lives from sharing news about yourself and many also share this kind of information. The average user has 130 Facebook friends. A fan of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* therefore only needed to invest five minutes into taking the quiz, to be delighted by finding out that he resembles Mr. Darcy’s heroic character and immediately had the opportunity to distribute the news with one more click to an average of 130 “friends”.

---


friends received the information from a personal contact, which made it more likely for them to accept and remember the message. Even if they did not care primarily if their acquaintance resembles a zombie, it might have been the first time for them to hear about the book *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. If they knew about it already the information might have amused and tempted them to take the quiz as well – resulting in the possible distribution to another average of 130 friends.

Emanuel Rosen explains that word of mouth is not only about specific verbal recommendations. Implicit statements, that can be as different as putting a poster on the wall of a dorm room or participating in Facebook groups and applications, are easier to make than expressing yourself in an email or in a conversation and get noticed as well.\(^\text{101}\) Facebook applications can therefore be an extremely helpful tool to spread implicit word of mouth and to communicate with a large number of people.

### 3.1.3f Using new technologies

Getting in contact with customers is easier than it was a few years ago. Seth Grahame-Smith did readings in bookstores across the USA in April and May 2009 via the free available VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) software Skype. It allows to voice chat while the conversational partner can be watched on a webcam and requires merely an Internet connection at either end. Obviously to watch a person on a screen while listening to an online telephone connection is a different experience than actually meeting and listening to someone in reality. However the arising expenses are very small since there are no costs for travel or accommodation and book readings via Skype therefore allow authors to visit places and to please audiences that they could otherwise never consider. It can’t replace conventional author tours and Seth Grahame-Smith also went on a small conventional book tour in June 2009 on the west coast of the USA. However, using Skype offers new opportunities

that certainly should be considered when an author or book title is popular enough to attract enough interested readers.

Facebook is not the only online platform that easily can spread word of mouth. It is advisable for publishers to be aware of new technologies, to understand and adopt the changes and to develop new marketing models tailored to support their individual titles.\textsuperscript{102}

One of the latest online tools to distribute information is Twitter. It was presented to the public in 2006 for the first time and is known as a short form of blogging. Users can publish text messages of up to 140 characters that will be visible to everybody who follows them. The simplicity of the service allows people to use it as a tool for live reporting of thoughts, ideas, and to easily share things they stumble upon. Since the service is free to use it attracts all kinds of users. Private individuals play with it and companies explore how it can successfully be integrated into their marketing activities. In 2009 Twitter gained respect when it was used by the Iranian population after mistrusted elections to organize protests and to report the events to the world public when all other forms of media were violently oppressed.\textsuperscript{103}

Quirk Books started to use Twitter in March 2009 for spreading news about \textit{Pride and Prejudice and Zombies} from their company’s Twitter account Irreference.\textsuperscript{104} In contrast to Facebook it is not only the customer who is following the publisher’s updates, but also the publishers who listen to what their customers have to say. By picking up the news about \textit{Pride and Prejudice and Zombies} and repeating them on their own Twitter accounts the users deliver the information to their own peers and help to spread the word. The distribution of news on Twitter is as quick and easy as on Facebook and has the same potential of becoming viral. Using Twitter is one

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[\textsuperscript{102}] Rosen, \textit{The Anatomy of Buzz Revisited}, 36.
\item[\textsuperscript{103}] BBC News 2009
\item[\textsuperscript{104}] Cohen 2009
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
opportunity to easily bring the same information to a partly different cluster of people and therefore it increases the chance for it to spread in new and wider circles.

3.1.3.6 Using traditional Strategies and Tactics of marketing
Quirk Books also used traditional ways to take advantage of the high interest in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* by offering the end customer additional articles to purchase. The poster of the book was not only a great object to promote the book in bookstores or to give away in contests; it was also available for fans to buy online.

Figure 5, cover image of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies Deluxe Heirloom Edition*, Quirk Books, 2009.

Figure 6, full-colour painting of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies Deluxe Heirloom Edition*, Quirk Books, 2009.

Another instrument to keep the word of mouth alive was the publication of a hardcover edition. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* was first published as an affordable paperback title for US$ 12.95. In reaction to the success of the paperback, Quirk Books announced in June 2009 a follow-up hardcover version to be released in November 2009 for the price of $29.95 in Canada and $24.95 in the USA. The new edition is bound in rich faux leather, with sewn binding, a rounded spine, head and
tail bands, and with thirty percent more zombie content as well as fifteen full-colour hand-painted artworks.\textsuperscript{105}

The hardcover version was published in November 2009 just in time to serve as Christmas present for the large fan community.

Announcing the \textit{Deluxe Heirloom Edition} in June already helped to keep the word of mouth alive. As soon as there was a new, classy cover that could be posted online, fans talked on Facebook about how they can’t wait to get the deluxe version of the book and Quirk also released two of the full-colour paintings, that were used as inside illustrations of the hardcover edition, and provided them for free in high quality to the online community.

The \textit{Pride and Prejudice and Zombies Deluxe Heirloom Edition} therefore was used long before its actual publication to give the book and its word of mouth a more noble touch, to raise it to the value of a collectors item instead of a cheap disposable novel and to provide fans with additional high quality material to talk about.

Another action to keep the word of mouth going was an online ad campaign that was started by Quirk Books in July 2009. Using advertising to support word of mouth is a delicate approach as it can destroy enthusiasm when it gives people the impression that they are expected to do the marketing for a company.\textsuperscript{106} Talkers want to spread insider news and not repeat advertising messages. If the advertising is done well however and stays true to the product it can be a useful tool to keep the attention and to affect the content of word of mouth positively.\textsuperscript{107}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[105] Raincoast Books Sell Sheet, unpublished data.
\item[106] Rosen, \textit{Anatomy of Buzz}, 213.
\item[107] Rosen, \textit{Anatomy of Buzz}, 208.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Quirk Books ran an ad campaign from July 1st to July 15th 2009 on two different online advertising networks. The first one was the network 24/7 Real Media which includes over 1,200 websites and the second one was the Google Content network which reaches seventy-six percent of the Internet users. The goal of the campaign was to promote *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* on a national level and to drive sales to Quirk Books’ large retail partners rather than to their own site. The landing page displayed links to purchase the book online at Amazon, Barnes & Nobles, Borders, and at local bookstores as well as the hint that it is available at Urban Outfitters, Target and CostCo. Another goal of the campaign was to create more buzz directly before the announcement of the second Quirk Classic title which took place in the middle of July.¹⁰⁸

The ads were created as flash animations in the classic style of the book and feature its cover. One of the ads shows the image of the cover girl being young and alive and suddenly replaces it with the image that is known from the cover of the book which presents her as a zombie. The second ad shares a similar design and comparable content. It gives the reader a link to read a sample of the book. Both ads display the call to action: “Buy the book today”. Moreover the ads both mention that the book is a *New York Times* bestseller and that it was recommended by Oprah as a top summer read. By clicking on it the advertisements lead the interested customer to a special landing page on Quirk Books website where the success of the individual ad could be measured and Quirk Books had the opportunity to adjust the campaign according to the impact of the two different ads.

The online advertising for *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* was done as a reminder campaign to support awareness of the book. It took place only online and at a time when the book was already famous, featured in the media, and had been on bestseller lists for several weeks. The purpose of the advertisements was therefore not to raise publicity for *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. The advertisements gave the

¹⁰⁸ Cohen 2009
readers new information, informed them about the success the book had achieved, and renewed their awareness. When the Quirk Classic follow up *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters* was announced in the middle of July, simultaneously with the end of the online campaign, it was building on a higher awareness of the publisher among readers. They had just heard of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* again and being confronted with the new title *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters* made it more likely for them to talk about the Quirk Classic series.

The advertising campaign was used at a carefully selected point in time and only for a short period. It therefore likely helped to spread the word of mouth by providing new information but without giving it too much presence in people’s life which could have annoyed them and killed the buzz around the book.

### 3.2 Correlation between Viral Development and Marketing

The marketing towards end customers followed a few simple principles. It guided the customers by constantly providing new and interesting information about all kinds of topics on a variety of different channels. Fans of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* were always involved in events and were invited to join the conversation with the publishers as well as with other fans. The high level of interaction that was triggered by the publishers via social media and contests kept the news interesting and the word of mouth alive.

The assumption that word of mouth can replace marketing and makes it redundant is therefore not supported by the case of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. The marketing that was done happened in conjunction with the viral spread of word of mouth and had the purpose to support it.

The result of the online tool Google Insights shows in the course of the year 2009 how often Google users searched for the term *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. The graphic does not display absolute numbers but it shows enquiries in relation to the
The first peak in February monitors the initial enthusiasm after the title went public, appears on blogs, and is covered by media. The interest peaks in April after the book was launched. Another small peak is visible in the middle of July when Oprah Winfrey recommended *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* as one of the top books to read for the summer. Interesting for the case of word of mouth however is the development over the long run. It is notable that the number of searches stayed on a similar high level over the five months that follow the peak of the publication and only declined slowly. The first peak in February is owed to the viral developments, the word of mouth that enthusiastic fans spread. The ongoing interest about the title in the following months however is also affected by the marketing efforts of the publishers.

Emanuel Rosen, in *The Anatomy of Buzz*, explains that buzz declines when the word of mouth loses its newness. The challenge of the marketing therefore was to provide new information and to engage the talkers in conversations to keep the topic interesting and the word of mouth alive. The publishers achieved this by

---

building a community around the book and leading discussions with new ideas and opportunities for fans to get involved.

The marketing for *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* was to a large extent targeted towards end customers. This approach is unusual for the publishing industry and was influenced by the viral character of the buzz. The publisher saw the potential in the developments and recognized the importance of supporting the word of mouth. Customers who read the book and liked it easily found platforms to talk about. In the case of another book title they also might have told some friends about it and spread the word, but after a short time new books and topics would have replaced it in the daily conversations.

Fans of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* however participated in events, had a relation to the author of the book by reading his Facebook updates and commenting on his concerns and, as seen in the LOL zombie contest, spent time being creative. They shared emotional moments with other group members when Michael Jackson died, followed as a group the appearance of the book on media such as the TV show *Heroes*, and together waited impatiently for the next title to get released. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* therefore was kept present in the fans’ daily life and they had more time to share their appreciation with friends and family and spread the word by mentioning one of the many topics that were built around it.

The initial conversations about the book were not triggered by any marketing. Throughout the following months however the marketing activities managed to guide the discussions, to involve the publisher in a conversation with the customers and to keep the buzz alive.

### 3.3 The Role of the Retailer Sector

Next to the marketing activities of the publisher and the distributor it was also the retail sector, which played an important role in making *Pride and Prejudice and*...
Zombies a success story. As early as in January 2009 Raincoast Books’ sales reps received in their meetings positive feedback about the new title from booksellers and librarians all over Canada. The major bookseller Indigo, for example, asked for a higher initial order than Raincoast Books was willing to give, so they provided detailed day-by-day sell through data from the first weeks of sales in April 2009, and helped to plan with long-term forecasting of estimated sales throughout the summer. The detailed reporting of sales data and the substantiated pre-orders lead to higher print runs and made the booksellers to be an important early-warning system.\(^{110}\)

Although the word of mouth developed online, a majority of the book sales happened in bookstores.\(^{111}\) This indicates the importance the retail sector had in making *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* a bestselling title. Communications between the publisher, distributors, and retails helped to be aware of the demand and to supply points of sale with sufficient amount of copies. Although most people heard about the book on the Internet, the majority did not order it online but made a purchase decision when they saw it displayed in a bookstore. Therefore it is important to acknowledge that even if the information about *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* spread on the Internet, the traditional retail sector was fundamentally involved in reaching the high sales number.

\(^{110}\) Broadhurst, Jamie, e-mail message to author on December 09, 2009.

\(^{111}\) Broadhurst, Jamie, e-mail message to author on December 09, 2009.
4 MARKETING FOR SENSE
AND SENSIBILITY AND SEA MONSTERS

Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters by Jane Austen and Ben H. Winters is the second Quirk Classic title. It was published about six months after Pride and Prejudice and Zombies and aimed towards an overlapping target group. While the pressure was enormous due to the success of Pride and Prejudice and Zombies and because the market was already getting used to the new tradition of monster mash-ups, the publisher benefited from the experience gained by promoting the first title. However, the enthusiasm for the new title was not comparable to the initial buzz around Pride and Prejudice and Zombies. The word of mouth therefore needed more support from the beginning, but Quirk Books had used the situation to build a social community around Pride and Prejudice and Zombies that could be addressed via Facebook, Twitter and blogs.\textsuperscript{112}

Quirk Books explains the difference in the marketing of Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters with the time they had to plan and to control the launch of the new title. They had the template for success from the first Quirk Classics and were able to use that knowledge for promoting the follow-up.\textsuperscript{113}

The marketing started under completely different conditions. Instead of one, four people were involved in the marketing and publicity and the initial budget was between $75,000 and $100,000 compared to an initial budget of zero dollars for Pride and Prejudice and Zombies.\textsuperscript{114}

\textsuperscript{112} Cohen 2009
\textsuperscript{113} Cohen 2009
\textsuperscript{114} Cohen 2009
The creation of buzz can in some ways be described as similar to good storytelling. “You build suspense by withholding information and releasing it gradually.”\textsuperscript{115} The mandatory part for this strategy, already having a fan base who is interested in the information you withhold,\textsuperscript{116} was given in the case of \textit{Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters}. Beginning in May 2009 the different channels such as Facebook, Twitter, key bloggers, and press releases to media, were used constantly to mention the upcoming new title as a combination of another classic novel with monsters, but without mentioning its name. All information was directed towards the announcement of the title on July 15th 2009 when an elaborately produced book video\textsuperscript{117} in the style of a Jane Austen Hollywood movie trailer was released.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{sense_sensibility_monsters_trailer.png}
\caption{Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters Trailer, Screenshot.}
\end{figure}

The decision to create a mystery around the title beforehand, to celebrate even the announcement of the name and by finally presenting it as a video trailer was deliberately made. It supported the spread of word of mouth in an optimal way with the ability of a video in mind to become viral on blogs and platforms such as

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{115} Rosen, \textit{Anatomy of Buzz}, 171.
\item \textsuperscript{116} Rosen, \textit{Anatomy of Buzz}, 172.
\item \textsuperscript{117} Youtube, \textit{Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters} book trailer, July 13, 2009, \url{http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_jZVE5uF24Q}
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
www.youtube.com and with a community of fans who were waiting for the name to get released and eager to talk about it.

On the day when the title was released the cover of the book was presented on the electronic Reuters Sign at the New York Times Square. Facebook users were informed on the day before that the next Quirk Classic title would be displayed at the Times Square sign between 7 am and 10 am and were asked to send in a photograph of the display in order to win a signed copy of the book. The publisher also promoted the book at the San Diego Comic Con in July with posters and postcards and offered the first chapter as a free download.

In order to keep the new title a secret up to the planned announcement but also to create excitement in the industry none of the publishers or distributors involved knew beforehand the name of the second Quirk Classics. It was presented only two days before the public release. All staff involved at the distributing companies was asked to sign a waiver to keep the title a secret. A password was sent out by Quirk in the morning of July 13th which opened the access to the Irreference youtube channel where the Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters book trailer could be watched for the first time. Afterwards a package from Quirk Books that had been delivered beforehand could be opened. It contained posters of the book as well as little rubber sea monsters.

“The fun of the hunt and the excitement to discover are worth talking about” and therefore are suited extremely well to influence word of mouth. The way the new title was kept secret for a long time, the contests around guessing it, and the

---

120 Sernovitz, Word-of-mouth marketing, 143.
spectacular release with a book trailer in movie style all helped to create an initial excitement among customers as well as within the industry.

Simultaneously to the release of the title a number of additional activities took place to support word of mouth. Interviews were given to media by the author, articles appeared in key news outlets, and the *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters* Facebook group was launched by the publisher. Two months later when the book became available in bookstores the Facebook group already had more than six hundred members.\(^{121}\)

In promoting *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters* Quirk Books did not rely on the autonomous word of mouth itself, however, it relied on the same principles that caused their success in the case of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. The publisher knew about the importance of supporting the viral spread. The marketing therefore was done with larger resources and more initial planning but it still focused on supporting word of mouth among customers. The publisher created an initial mystery around which classic novel as well as what kind of monsters would be used, celebrated the release of the book’s title as much as the publication of the book itself, gave fans material to distribute, information to talk about, and made them actively involved from the beginning.

\(^{121}\) Cohen 2009
The Google Insights search for *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters* shows a similar development to the search for *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. The first peak shows the initial interest when the title of the book is announced in the middle of July 2009 and is only surpassed by the publication of the book in September 2009. Although the interest declines after the publication, it still stays on a level of about forty percent of the highest interest.

The book trailer of *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters* was viewed more than seventy thousand times within the first week after its launch[^22] and the result of the entire effort was finding the book after ten days on the *New York Times* bestseller list.[^23]

---

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The Actions of the Publisher

*Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* became a bestseller because of a number of different reasons that all played together. The increase in brief personal contacts that today’s technologies allow people to maintain and the potential of social networks and online communities to fuel a viral spread were aspects that created the conditions for the word of mouth success to take place. The strength of the book itself to become viral was the part that made the success possible. The new concept of monster mash-ups, the catching title of the book with the surprising cover image and its ability to attract a variety of people in different social clusters were the main responsible factors for the book to become known in the first place.

The reactions of the publishers to this situation focused on three points: tracking the word of mouth, supporting the conversations, and communication within in the supply chain.

5.2.1 Tracking the Word of Mouth

What made the publicity of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* special was that no marketing was involved in the first weeks after the title became public. Instead a conversation about the title occurred independently. The activities of the publishers at the beginning were mainly to track the conversations that were going on in the online world and in the media. In order to plan future activities and to be prepared for the demand, it was necessary to understand these developments, to see who the people were that talked about the title and to know on what platforms the discussions took place. Online tools were useful to track the number of blogs that mentioned *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* and advance orders at Amazon gave an idea about the extent of the demand. The publishers did not have any control over the incidents at any point of time and only could watch them carefully. To notice the leaking of the cover image and listening to customers, booksellers, librarians,
and the online community and tracking the word of mouth from the beginning was therefore probably the most important step taken.

5.2.2 Supporting the Conversations
This case study shows that word of mouth is not a marketing tool that can be used easily without investment. While it is true that the start of the spread and the initial enthusiasm emerged without the publishers help, it was the marketing that kept the interest in the title alive for at least six months after the publication and that made it possible to capitalize on the success of this book. Only by joining the discussions as the publisher, providing constantly new topics to talk about, offering new platforms, making it fun to be part of the story, and supporting the conversation among customers it was possible to keep people interested and to spread the word farther. The increased marketing budget of up to $75,000 that was spent for Pride and Prejudice and Zombies during the process and the high level of involvement by the publicists and the author show how Quirk Books saw the importance of supporting word of mouth instead of relying on it to stay active by itself.

5.2.3 Communication within the Industry
Another key part in turning the initial word of mouth into a successful book was the communication among the different players in the supply chain. Quirk Books, as well Raincoast Books in their responsibility for the Canadian market, constantly kept in touch with each other as well as with sales reps, wholesalers, and booksellers to exchange information about word of mouth, about publicity hits online and in media. The result was that by the time the book got published all participants in the industry were aware of the publicity, expected the demand and could satisfy it. The actual sales numbers got compared and reviewed weekly and because of the interaction across the supply chain and across countries it was easier to track the developments, plan print runs, and supply the point of sales with a sufficient number of copies of the book.
5.2 Final Statement

This case study shows that the publishing industry can exploit word of mouth strategies to supplement conventional marketing methods by maintaining a conversation with the customers. More important than ever before is communication among industry partners and a major part of promoting a title is to stimulate a conversation about it. As a result of their experiences with *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, Quirk Books established social media as an important part of their marketing and publicity and puts more effort in engaging customers and empowering them to spread the word.
6 BIBLIOGRAPHY


Cohen, Brett (Vice President of Operations, Quirk Books). Interview, September 2009.


Is-Any-Publicity-Good-Publicity-A-Note-on-the (accessed October 5, 2009).


