

JEWELRY

A. Lange & Shne spotlights literary connections with digital readings

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A. Lange & Shne Saxonía Automatic timepieces

By SARAH JONES

Richemont-owned watchmaker A. Lange & Shne is prompting consumers to explore its beginnings through a fictional account.

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German author Christoph Scheuring's novel "Signs of the Times" is based on A. Lange & Shne founder Ferdinand Adolph Lange's life, using his biography as the frame to tell the story of Saxony's industrial history in the early 1800s. While A. Lange & Shne did not publish the work itself, the brand is promoting the book's release through digital readings and content.

"A. Lange & Shne has likely chosen to promote Scheuring's book for a couple of reasons," said Donnie Pacheco, principal at [Clean Channel Consulting, Inc.](#), Seattle.

"The first is to cast a broader marketing net to reach new consumers by tying in with any other marketing activities that may be used to promote the book," he said. "The second is to help fill in the blanks for the brand's founder.

"The brand is directly tied to the founder's story so this story is an important one for the brand. By telling his story, even though it is through a fictional comparison, they are now able to tell the full history of the founder, something that was previously missing.

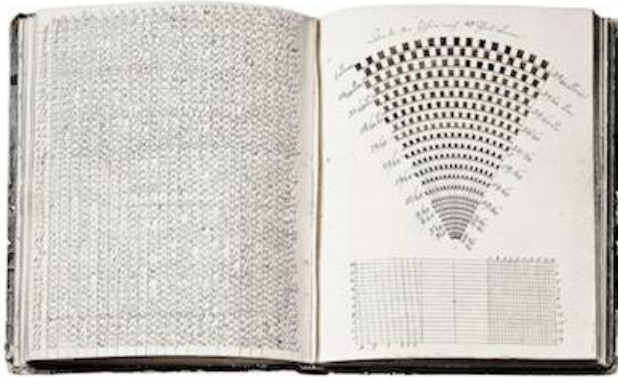
"More importantly, it tells a story of someone special that overcame difficult circumstances, which is a likable and relatable story for consumers."

Mr. Pacheco is not affiliated with [A. Lange & Shne](#), but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

[A. Lange & Shne](#) did not respond before press deadline.

Back to its roots

Mr. Scheuring's novel, published by Hoffmann & Campe, tells the story of Mr. Lange as a child, a time not typically covered in other accounts of the watchmaker's life. To provide foils for his character, the author created two fictional friends for him.



Ferdinand Adolph Lange's workbook, complete with his calculations

Mr. Lange's rough gunsmith father left the family, which in turn led the protagonist to be raised by foster parents. They encouraged his schooling, including his enrollment at Royal Technical College, where his scientific skills were honed.

On Facebook, A. Lange & Shne offers excerpts of the book in video. Against visuals of the physical book propped open, a man reads from the pages in English.

The first excerpt sets the scene of Saxony in the 1830s, as Mr. Scheuring lays out the difference between the towns, where some machines are being put to use, and the countryside that more closely resembles the Middle Ages.

As the narrator reaches the end of his passage, he lays out the key questions poised in the novel, which cover justice's unsure existence, the path of progress, the concept of beauty and whether man will ever become one with creation. According to the brand, these thoughts are no less important 200 years later.

The second episode finds Mr. Lange's friend Jakob being taught to write for the first time. As he runs a quill over a piece of paper, his teacher notes his unusual skill for a beginner.

A third episode is yet to be released.

"It is doubtful that these readings will have an impact on the consumer interest in the novel beyond resonating with readers that like an underdog story," Mr. Pacheco said. "Even if consumers don't buy the book, these excerpts allow the brand to further tell the story of their founder."

"The brand is tied to the founder and it is important for the brand to leverage his story," he said. "The comparisons drawn through the use of fictional characters tell the story of someone special, who had a gift and even in difficult circumstances this gift shined."

"It is not the story of someone of privilege creating a brand for ego. People connect with an underdog story and this draws comparisons to show the founder as one."

Luxury in literature

Longer-form works have offered brands an opportunity to delve further into their founding story.

Italian footwear label Salvatore Ferragamo raised global awareness for the story of its founder through the brand's first comic book that tied in with a 2013 exhibition.

The 26-page "Making of a Dream" comic book was drawn and written by animator, illustrator and cartoonist Frank Espinosa, who read Mr. Ferragamo's autobiography to inspire the work. The graphic novel debuted a month after "The Amazing Shoemaker" exhibit opened at the Museo Salvatore Ferragamo that took visitors through the life of the designer ([see story](#)).

Sometimes brands end up as characters in beloved tales. Even when not planned as a marketing endeavor, these fictional features are often a source of pride, opening up possibilities for branded campaigns.

For instance, the Fairmont-managed Plaza Hotel in New York encouraged young guests to interact with "Eloise at The Plaza" through a photo initiative.

From June to October last year, guests with small children were encouraged to download a paper cutout of the

Eloise character to bring along as they visit sites in New York and elsewhere. Eloise, a fictional children's book character written by Kay Thompson, lives in The Plaza Hotel, and the property often uses her as an engagement tool to interact with young fans ([see story](#)).

"The potential benefit for brands being associated with fiction is to have a broader marketing effort, raise brand awareness and possibly reach new consumers," Mr. Pacheco said. "In this case, the risks are minimal because the brand is not making a claim that this is real, they clearly state that fictional characters are being used to draw comparisons and there nothing negative based on the readings.

"The risk for brands would be if they tried to misrepresent fictional information, if it portrayed the brand negatively or if it had no relevance to the brand."

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