



Ira Arnault

The Book Publishing Industry in the Digital Age

Social media and online book communities

Metropolia University of Applied Sciences

Bachelor of Business Administration

International Business and Logistics

Bachelor's Thesis

28 November 2025

Abstract

Author(s): Ira Arnault
Title: The Book Publishing in the Digital Age
Number of Pages: 49 pages
Date: 28 November 2025

Degree: Bachelor of Business Administration
Degree Programme: International Business and Logistics
Specialisation option: Supply Chain Management
Supervisor: Michael Keaney, Senior Lecturer

The book publishing industry has been affected by the digital era's digitalisation, as book formats can be divided into traditional paper books and digital formats such as e-books and audiobooks. Consumers, their behaviour, and purchasing decisions are influenced by internal and external factors, providing insight into their overall market actions. Social media has many uses for influencers and book-related businesses, and readers have online book communities on BookTok, BookTube, and Bookstagram, where there are passionate discussions and engagement occurring. Though anyone can influence others without fitting into the expectation that to be an "influencer," a high following is required. Each book's format has its pros and cons when it comes to environmental impact, accessibility, and the overall experience of a reader. Also, considering the risks and possibilities of piracy, e-books and audiobooks are accessible and available in digital form.

The research aims to answer two qualitative research questions that allow flexibility and space for interpretations and analysis. "How the digital era changed book publishing industry" and "How has TikTok's BookTok influenced reader consumers and businesses in the book industry. Research was conducted by first building a theoretical understanding of marketing and consumers' actions in the market, what possibilities social media enables for these users, and then how each online book community and book format works for a reader. The qualitative research method of analysis and interpretation was utilized, as many sources were compared to support or contradict each other.

The first finding was that paper books are popular while experiencing small decreases during the years of the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide and in the United States. E-books have their own steady sales, and audiobook sales have kept increasing continuously. The second finding is that online book communities, BookTok have had a positive influence on community and participation, being possible for everyone, not only readers, but also bookstores and libraries. Though the communities also showed signs and pressure to overconsume books as an aesthetic and to be an idealistic image of a reader.

Keywords: Digitalisation, Online Book Communities, Book Formats

The originality of this thesis has been checked using Turnitin Originality Check service.

Contents

Glossary

1	Introduction	2
1.1	Background of the research	2
1.2	Objective and research questions	3
2	Theoretical framework and literature review	3
2.1	Marketing in book publishing	4
2.1.1	The Marketing Mix of 4Ps applied to book publishing	5
2.2	Understanding consumer behaviour and analysis	8
2.2.1	Consumer decision-making process	12
2.3	Introduction to social media	14
2.3.1	Ways for a business to use social media	15
2.3.2	How influencers use social media	16
2.4	Online book communities in social media	17
2.4.1	TikTok's #BookTok	18
2.4.2	YouTube's BookTube	21
2.4.3	Instagram's #Bookstagram	23
2.5	Pros and Cons of Book Formats	24
2.5.1	Digital piracy of e-books and audiobooks	26
3	Research methods	28
3.1	Methodology	28
3.2	Data collection	29
3.3	Limitations	30
4	Findings and discussion	30
4.1	Covid-19 book sales	30
4.1.1	Analysis of Worldwide Sales	31
4.1.2	Analysis of United States sales	33
4.2	Influence online book communities	34
4.2.1	Positive Influence of Sense of Community	34
4.2.2	Negative Influence of Overconsumption	35

5 Conclusion

37

References

39

Table of Figures

Figure 1. Five-step process of how businesses create value for the customer to gain value in return (Kotler, et al., 2021, pp. 26-27).....	4
Figure 2. Three Elements for Consumer Analysis (Peter & Olson, 2008, p. 22) .	9
Figure 3 Consumer decision-making process step-by-step (Kotler, et al., 2021, pp. 169-170).....	12
Figure 4. Screenshot of what type of posts are under #booktok (TikTok, 2025)	20
Figure 5: Screenshot from YouTube, what kind of posts are under #booktube (YouTube, 2025).....	22
Figure 6. Screenshot from Instagram, what type of posts are under #bookstagram	24
Figure 7. Book market revenue by each book format market Worldwide, 2017-2030 (Statista Market Insights, 2025a)	31
Figure 8. Book market revenue by each book format market in the United States, 2017-2030 (Statista Market Insights, 2025b)	33

Glossary

4Ps	4Ps is a marketing mix that consists of four elements, which are product, price, place, and promotion.
Bookstagram	Bookstagram Instagram's subcommunity that focuses on book-related topics and content
BookTok	BookTok is TikTok's subcommunity that focuses on book-related topics and content
BookTube	BookTube YouTube's subcommunity that focuses on book-related topics and content
TBR	Acronym for "To Be Read"

1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the research

The thesis aims to discuss research on how the digital era, and social media in particular, have affected the book publishing industry and the market of consumers who are interested in books. The book publishing industry has evolved significantly during the digital age, with numerous changes, and especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been shifts in consumer behaviour and book sales. In 2020, across the world, people and businesses were forced into lockdown, which dramatically affected the norm of everyone's daily life.

Along with the general advance of digitalisation, social media assumed a greater importance during the pandemic. This is hardly surprising, as the various digital platforms had already enabled people to contact, connect, and discuss with other people in the world through posts. Evidence suggests that digital platform use has been permanently enhanced as a result of lockdown (Polyakova, et al., 2024). This makes an understanding of the implications of digitalisation even more urgently required.

The social media platform users include not only people but businesses that want to connect with their target consumers in the market and understand them before planning their marketing strategy. On social media platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram, readers and consumers share their enthusiasm for books and book-related content.

Printed paper books have become available online in the form of e-books and audiobooks because of digitalisation. This era has given consumers more format choices outside the traditional hard and soft cover paper books. The debate regarding the merits of printed paper books and digital books is endless. It typically focuses on which one is more popular among consumers and has

higher sales. However, while digitalisation has made books more accessible since they are available in digital form, there is piracy by hackers, digital pirates, and individuals who seek to bypass paywalls to access content for free (Zimmerman, Martin, 2011).

1.2 Objective and research questions

The digital era and social media have brought changes to the book publishing industry and more options for businesses to market books to consumers. During the pandemic, TikTok's BookTok influenced consumers and businesses to act more in the book market. Consumers connect through social media about books more than ever, and businesses have taken notice. As a result of this relatively recent phenomenon, the questions that will be central to the research of this thesis are:

Q1. How has the digital era changed the book publishing industry?

Q2. How has TikTok's BookTok influenced consumers and book-related businesses?

The research questions provide an open-ended approach to researching the phenomenon of the digital era in the book publishing industry and social media. The thesis isn't trying to find a correct answer for these questions or test a hypothesis; instead, it utilises them to engage in exploratory research to identify the impact of digitalisation on the industry by engaging in a systematic review of the relevant literature.

2 Theoretical framework and literature review

The literature review begins by discussing marketing theory, elements of consumer behaviour analysis, and the consumer decision-making process, which together provide a theoretical understanding of business and consumer actions in the market. The second part introduces social media as a marketing

tool for businesses and influencers. The second part discusses the definition of what an influencer is and how influencers and regular users utilise the platforms and influence their audience. The third part showcases online book communities in social media platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram. The fourth part introduces what consumption formats the book publishing industry offers to readers, a discussion of sales of each book format, and the problem of online e-book piracy.

2.1 Marketing in book publishing

There are many definitions of marketing. For example, the American Marketing Association (2025) explains marketing and its activities in more detail as follows: “Marketing is the activity, set of institutions and processes for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (American Marketing Association, 2025). As a process, marketing requires businesses and individuals to research their customer audience's “needs” and “wants” in order to create value and build a relationship based on results (Kotler, et al., 2021).



Figure 1. Five-step process of how businesses create value for the customer to gain value in return (Kotler, et al., 2021, pp. 26-27).

Figure 1 features a simplified five-step process by Philip Kotler & Gary Armstrong (Kotler, et al., 2021) that explains briefly the steps that businesses should take to succeed in capturing value from their customers, by creating value in the product for them. Based on the process presented, for businesses to succeed, they are required to understand their customers and act accordingly (Kotler, et al., 2021, pp. 24-25).

2.1.1 The Marketing Mix of 4Ps applied to book publishing

First developed by E. Jerome McCarthy in 1960, the 4Ps of marketing consist of product, price, place, and promotion (Kenton, 2025). These elements are important for the business to consider when creating a marketing plan to engage with and hopefully satisfy the consumers (Kotler, et al., 2021; Jain, et al., 2019, pp. 5-6). The description of the four Ps is summarized by Jain et. al (2019) as follows:

“Product offering to consumers includes ingredients, colors, sizes, shapes, features, characteristics, and so on. Price refers to the monetary payment that is to be paid by consumers, and it includes returns, discounts, allowance, and modes of payment; place denotes the store or non-store where products are sold; and promotion relates to advertising, public relation, and personal selling that develop awareness about products amongst consumers” (Jain, et al., 2019, p. 5).

These product elements are all within the control of the publisher's business, at least to some extent. For this reason, they should form the basis of a marketing plan; ideally, before the product or service is even conceptualised and distributed. Muftau Biobaku discusses how book publishers can utilise the four Ps when it comes to books. This section presents and analyses Biobaku's findings.

The product is what the publisher plans to offer to the consumer based on the research conducted beforehand. In a study of marketing in book publishing, Biobaku (2009) introduces the idea that the book is the product that publishers want to offer to consumers. The characteristics that book publishers should consider include the appearance and design of the book cover, quality, packaging form, whether the book is hardcover or softcover, and the branding process tailored to the book's themes and genre (Biobaku, 2009). Other format options that the publisher and author could also consider are e-book and audiobook formats. In the article '4Ps of Book Marketing,' it is argued that the

consumer will first notice the cover design of the book, which could determine if they will search for more information, such as reading the book description behind the book and online reviews (The Happy Self-Publisher, 2021). This could mean that the book cover design should appeal enough for it to catch the consumer's attention and interest.

After the product planning, the publisher can plan a **price** that is acceptable from the consumer's viewpoint and additionally ensure that the publisher can make a profit from the product. To achieve this, the publisher is required to consider the value of the product and how to convince the consumer to make the purchase (Kotler, et al., 2021). The price of a book should be based on the characteristics and costs of the production of the product, including raw materials such as paper, ink text and colours for the cover, processes of creating, proof-reading, and editing the book format and its contents, and later process involving on test printing final printing of the book, and post production activities of distribution and promotion (Bush, 2023; Biobaku, 2009). All these costs are prior to any income to be earned by the publishers and author(s). The Happy Self-Publisher (2021) recommends that self-publishing authors explore the other books in the market that share similar characteristics to the genre of the book they want to publish. This would enable understanding what price would be appropriate and acceptable from the consumer's viewpoint (The Happy Self-Publisher, 2021).

Place refers to the distribution channels where the product, in this case books, is made available and marketed by the business for the consumers and involves the activities that are taken to distribute them (Biobaku, 2009; 2021, p. 72). Due to books being in physical and digital formats, they can be offered, for example, in physical locations where the consumer can go in person, such as local bookstores, libraries, and bookfairs, and remotely or virtually through online retail or book-specific shops, such as Amazon and Barnes and Noble (Biobaku, 2009; The Happy Self-Publisher, 2021). However, it should be taken into consideration that whether the consumer goes to purchase their product in person or remotely depends on their preferences and behaviour. Determining

the distribution can depend on whether the publisher wants to expand the product's reach into a larger area, up to and including the worldwide book market (The Happy Self-Publisher, 2021).

Promotion is a tool for the publisher that will enable bringing awareness to its product by selling, informing, and advertising the existence of the to-be-published books to potential business and individual customers (Biobaku, 2009). However, even though promotion is expected as an action of generating sales, it is more than just that, as it allows the author to build a connection with the reader-consumers beyond the immediate publishing schedule (The Happy Self-Publisher, 2021). This indicates that chasing profitable sales does not determine success despite the effort invested in advertising. Reader-consumers often want to get to know the author and engage with them, especially now because of the immediacy provided by digital environments. Promotion of self-publishing authors can mean self-promoting and building a brand for themselves that the reader will know them by. This could be their writing style, or what type of genre and content they want to be known for (The Happy Self-Publisher, 2021).

These 4Ps of book publishing enable understanding specifically for books, including what is hidden behind the creation, production, and overall planning of a book before and after publication into the market as a sellable product. A book is more than just its front cover and back cover, with the description of the story and content that it holds between them. As a lot of thought and work is put into producing to make sure the book is polished and finished for it is brought to the hands of the reader consumer in their local bookstore. Books are not exclusively published by huge book publishing corporations such as Penguin Random House. There are smaller middle-sized and boutique publishers, and some authors themselves are active in their book production and publishing process.

2.2 Understanding consumer behaviour and analysis

A consumer can be defined as a single individual or organisation that purchases products and services provided by a business for use for consumption purposes (Kuluttajaliitto, 2025). In book publishing, a consumer can be considered a reader who consumes (purchases) books. In contrast, the book community people devoted to the reading of books encompasses both buyers and borrowers of books, as well as publishers. Consumers are complex and diverse with respect to age, education, occupation, and income, all of which can affect their behaviour and purchases (Kotler, et al., 2021, p. 152).

The study of consumer behaviour examines how an individual's purchasing choices are affected by marketing stimuli and other elements of social, cultural, environmental, and psychological factors (Kotler, et al., 2021; Rusdian, et al., 2024, pp. 76-77). Rusdian, et al. (2024, pp. 77-78) also emphasize that consumer behaviour is an ongoing field of study and requires continuous research as it evolves and more information is found.

For businesses to understand consumers, they should analyse the basic consumer in the market and, if necessary, identify their target customer group (Kotler, et al., 2021; Peter & Olson, 2008). When it comes to the framework of consumer analysis Peter & Olson (2008, pp. 22-26) introduce three elements that require analysis for businesses to create effective marketing strategies or improve them. In general, these elements enable understanding of consumer behaviour and therefore facilitate the development of improved or new products that could satisfy the consumer.

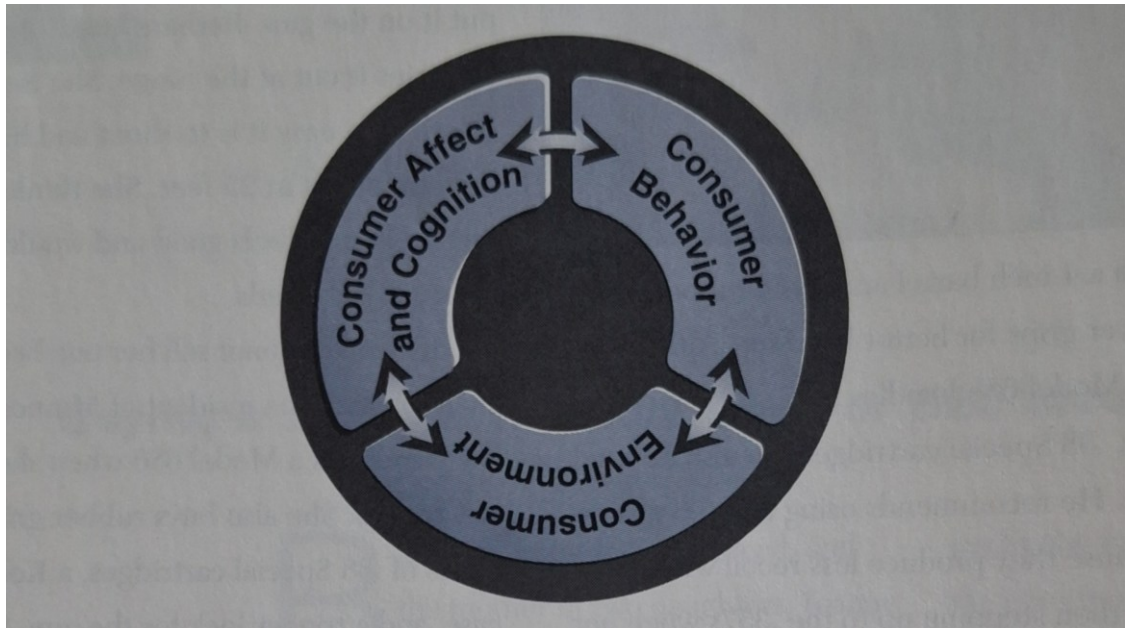


Figure 2. Three Elements for Consumer Analysis (Peter & Olson, 2008, p. 22)

In Figure 2. the displayed three elements that influence the consumer are affect and cognition, behaviour, and environment. The authors elaborate on the connection between these elements and how each is a source or result of the other, hence the two-sided arrows in Figure 2 (Peter & Olson, 2008, p. 25).

“Each element is critical for developing a complete understanding of consumers and selecting strategies to influence them” (Peter & Olson, 2008, p. 22). This means the elements after understanding each of them enable understanding and, in the end, easier planning and choosing of a marketing strategy to reach the target consumer in the market.

Consumers have psychological responses towards their environment and the stimuli and events in that specific environment. Stimuli that can affect the consumer are things they see in the environment, like advertisements, campaigns, and products they might see in stores or online (Jain, et al., 2019, p. 8). Those are only external stimuli as Kotler, et al (2021, p. 169) list them as such, along with internal stimuli that influence from inside the consumer’s mind.

Affect and Cognition are both psychologically different responses that a consumer will have, Peter and Olson (2008, p. 22) introduce affect as more

emotions and feeling-based elements, while cognition is more based on the consumer's thoughts and reasoning, which include mental processing such as interpretation, understanding, and evaluation. The affect element involves emotions; it encompasses both positive and negative mentions that consumers may have towards stimuli around them, such as other people's responses, the environment, and behaviours (Peter & Olson, 2008, pp. 22,39-40). Each affective response isn't planned in the consumer's mind; they are usually automatic and based on their original environment, where they grew up, and where they are in the current stage in their life (Peter & Olson, 2008, pp. 40-41).

Peter and Olson (2008) refer to cognition as the broad system of mental processes of the consumer's understanding, evaluation, planning, decision making, and thinking of stimuli around them. The consumer's cognitive system interprets the past and current experiences and creates conclusions from the stimuli they encounter. However, the authors note later that the cognitive actions of the consumers aren't extensive and can be very minimal during the process of their behaviour and purchases (Peter & Olson, 2008).

The second element is consumer behaviour, which businesses can influence by offering or emphasizing a specific characteristic in their product, which could result in a purchase. These can vary from high quality, fast and easy availability, low prices, or overall offering superior service to influence shift or change in the behaviour (Peter & Olson, 2008, p. 23). Ultimately, the specific configuration of the 4 Ps addresses this aspect of consumer behaviour. Behaviour is the external actions that a consumer does in response to the stimuli in the environment. Peter and Olson refer to this by using the term "overt behaviour" specifically, as "It refers to the observable and measurable responses or actions of consumers" (Peter & Olson, 2008, p. 194). Additionally, Rusdian, et al. (2024) describe consumer behaviour as "actions and decision-making processes undertaken by individuals or groups when purchasing and using products or services" (Rusdian, et al., 2024).

The third element of the consumer environment refers to the place and surroundings where the consumer meets and is affected by mainly external factors and learns their behaviour through social interaction. Peter and Olson (2008, p. 256) describe the consumer's environment, physical products and shopping locations and social relationships, and interaction with others in their world. This means that not everything in the environment includes interaction with other people, but it can also involve encountering a physical object or space where the consumer can be.

There are two levels that the consumer's environment is divided into, which are the macro and micro. First, the macro environment consists of large-scale factors such as economic conditions, political system, and the overall landscape of the consumer's country. These can affect the microenvironment, for example, the economic condition that surrounds the consumer can affect the consumer's income levels and how much of it they spend on things other than the fixed costs of living.

Second, the microenvironment concerns small-scale factors, which are divided by Peter and Olson (2008) into physical and social aspects in the consumer's environment. For this research, the focus is mainly on the social aspects of macro and micro environments.

For the macro environment of a consumer, the main aspects are the culture, subculture, and social class that the consumer has. Peter & Olson (2008) view that the consumer culture, subculture, and social class as part of the macro environment. However, similarly, without mentioning these to be macro environment, Kotler et. al (2021) label these as cultural factors which would have the broadest influence on a consumer. All societies have cultures that affect the consumer in that specific group, as it is where they learn and form some of their basic wants and learned behaviour (Kotler, et al., 2021).

As mentioned, when discussing Peter & Olson (2008) affect and cognition elements, which are more internal, some are also learned through the

environment of the consumer. Culture also includes subcultures, under which can be demographic groups that share similar experiences and can relate to each other as they live in the society or group (Kotler, et al., 2021).

Thirdly, there is the social class, which, for a consumer, to some extent affects their actions and the basis for how they can behave in the market. Most societies have developed a class structure of their own. Social classes are relatively permanent and organized. Members of classes share similar behaviours, values, and interests. Social class is determined by several factors, such as wealth, income, education, occupation, and combinations of other variable factors. There are social systems in which members cannot change their social status and are raised to behave in certain roles (Kotler, et al., 2021).

As for the consumer's micro environment, Peter & Olson explain this is affected by these macro environment factors. The social aspect of consumers' micro environment is usually physical and face-to-face interaction with family, friends, and others they encounter in their daily life (Peter & Olson, 2008, pp. 259-260). Similarly for the consumer, all people in their life are affected by the things that happen in the same or other macro environment, as their cultures, subcultures, and social class may differ (Peter & Olson, 2008, pp. 259-260).

2.2.1 Consumer decision-making process

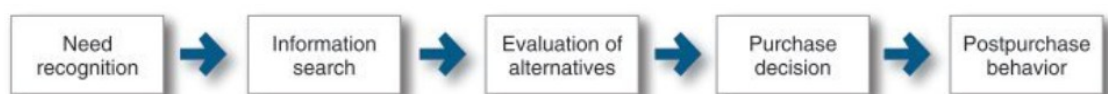


Figure 3 Consumer decision-making process step-by-step (Kotler, et al., 2021, pp. 169-170)

To understand a consumer in the market, it is essential to gain insight into the process of their decision-making how does a consumer decide which product is best for their own preference. The consumer decision-making process explains the steps a consumer goes through before, during, and after purchasing a product, as displayed in Figure 3. Kotler et al. (2021, pp. 169-) describe this

process as a five-step process of a consumer's decision-making. Kotler et. al (2021, pp. 169-170) note that not all of the steps in the process happen, as a consumer might skip them, for example, when making routine purchases.

Step 1. Recognition of need or want: the consumer will recognise a need or want for a product or service affected by internal or external stimuli, either craving for something new or seeing something new in the environment that intrigues their interest (Kotler, et al., 2021).

In some cases, the need is based on hunger or thirst for a certain consumable product (Kotler, et al., 2021). Following this example, it is possible that if a consumer is faced with boredom, they will aim to find an entertainment product to satisfy their need. It should be noted that in Figure 1, the only term mentioned is "needs," not "wants." According to Kotler et al (2021, p. 26) "wants" are the objective form of what "needs" later on turn, for example, boredom generates a need, while the product of entertainment like a movie, book, or game would be their want in response to the need.

Step 2. Information search & Step 3 Evaluation: after the consumer's want for a product is recognised, the consumer can conduct an information search of the products that the market has to offer, and thirdly, evaluate alternatives and their characteristics (Kotler, et al., 2021). Though, as mentioned before, if the consumer knows what specific product they want, this and other steps could be skipped in order to go directly to the purchase.

Step 4. Final decision and purchase: As a result of the consumers' evaluation, Kotler, et al. (2021) note that the purchased product is usually the one that meets most of the demands of the consumer. It is worth remembering that this can be affected by other people's opinions, even if the consumer has made their own decision. The influence of others is well-recognised, to the extent that "influencer marketing" is a well-established practice (Campbell & Farrell, 2020).

Step 5. Post-purchase behaviour and evaluation: Kotler et al. (2021, p. 172) write that although the consumer has reached the goal of purchasing the product, it does not end there. As the purchase is made and the consumer has the product, the consumer goes through a behaviour while using the product. The evaluation of that process will determine a variety of future decisions, including repeat purchases, whether to supply feedback, what kind of feedback to supply, to whom feedback is supplied, and so on.

2.3 Introduction to social media

Social media is an “internet-based technology which enables individuals and businesses to share content and interact with each other” (Almaida, et al., 2021; Lin & Rauschnabel, 2016). The content users usually share on social media includes pictures, videos, and chat messages between each other.

The most common way individuals use social media is to exchange and seek information about themselves and others (Lin & Rauschnabel, 2016). Social media allows people and businesses to interact and learn about each other, which is why it is useful in marketing. Facebook, Reddit, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and various others can be considered social media platforms. The various forms of social media and what is required to access them can be summarised as follows:

“The most important forms of social media platforms are social networks, blogs, opinion platforms, and content sharing platforms. To access these social media platforms, desktop computers, laptops, smartphones and tablets are currently the typical interface technologies” (Lin & Rauschnabel, 2016).

What can be interpreted from Lin & Rauschnabel’s (2016) summary is that there are many different forms of social media people can use, and most of them are accessible using many electronic devices that use the internet or have an application service on them.

2.3.1 Ways for a business to use social media

Social media marketing is one of the digital marketing options that is defined as aiming to achieve marketing and customer acquisition with digital channels (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2015). Social media enables businesses to reach their potential customers who would be interested in the products or services they have to offer. As Dominyka et al (2023) write, companies that include social media as a channel of marketing in their marketing strategy can have the ability to communicate and reach their target and potential consumers. Additionally, this action can help attract awareness for their business and selection of products or services in the market when considering the future (Dominyka, et al., 2023). Based on that, companies and organisations, and even individuals, have increased the use of social media as a channel of marketing. Social media offers an opportunity to engage and communicate with consumers and learn about their customers, as Lin and Rauschnabel (2016) note that by monitoring social media, the business will gain information which enables understanding and interpretation of what the consumer characteristics value and understand in a brand.

Companies and organisations can either manage the marketing themselves, hire a specialist agency or consulting firm, or, perhaps in combination with either of the preceding options, recruit the help of an influencer. On how influencers are more likely to appeal to a consumer on social media platforms, Campbell & Farrell (2020) write that “Consumers prefer less intrusive advertising when online, so they respond more favorably to influencer content, which is generally more subtly styled and less overtly promotional than brand created ads” (Campbell & Farrell, 2020, p. 473). This means that consumers' response to an advertisement by a company can be more distrusting and reserved than it would be to an influencer's promotion. Additionally, an influencer can already have an audience with whom they have a connection and build trust with the consumer group that the company is aiming to reach (Halonen, 2019).

2.3.2 How influencers use social media

Freberg (2011) uses the term social media influencer, when discussing influencers who use social media. Social media influencers are independent individuals who influence others through the posts they share on social media (Freberg, et al., 2011). This research will continue using just the term influencer. Influencers are usually micro-celebrity individuals who promote or recommend a product or service to their followers via social media platforms. Jose Alvarez-Monzoncillo describes influencers as semi-celebrities who have obtained a high status and have the power reach wider audiences (Alvarez-Monzoncillo, 2023). According to academic research, influencers are also known by other terms such as social media influencer, online opinion leader, and virtual influencer (Hawkins, 2023; Freberg, et al., 2011; Lin, et al., 2018), but this thesis will continue to use the generic term “influencer”. Influencers rely on their number of followers and how many interactions their posts get, such as likes, comments and shares (Freberg, et al., 2011) though these actions are automatically happening without certain characteristics of the influencer. An influencer is required to have the ability to produce content that is relevant to their interest, along with their audience's, and to analyse how each type of content was received (Halonen, 2019).

The influencers do not have to have a high follower count in the beginning, prior to becoming better known. Any normal user of social media has the ability and opportunity to become an influencer (Halonen, 2019). This means a user of social media can influence others despite creating content about books as a hobby or to connect with others who are passionate about reading.

While influencers rely on the number of followers and views to reach their audience, vice versa, the people who follow them view them as a reliable source of information and could be biased towards them. However, Tomasena (2019) contradicts this by claiming that BookTubers, a community of influencers on YouTube, despite not having a relatively high number of followers, play a

role in the book publishing industry and can influence readers and publishers in their actions (Tomasena, 2019).

There are different types of influencers, some with higher and others with lower following, though it does not mean that they do not have any; they can build trust and connect with others who have similar interests.

2.4 Online book communities in social media

Following the previous section on social media, there are online subcommunities for users who enjoy books and literature. In scholarly discussion of online activity associated with books, three online book communities are featured the most: BookTok (TikTok), BookTube (YouTube) and Bookstagram (Instagram) (Tomasena, 2019; Arnone, 2021; Dera, et al., 2023; Perkins, 2017). Each name is formed from the word book and the end part of a specific social media platform. All these are subcommunities on their respective social media platform and have readers discussing anything in relation to literature. BookTok, as the name suggests, is an online book community of TikTok, BookTube belongs to YouTube, and Bookstagram is hosted on Instagram. The online book platforms will be introduced and discussed in that order, along with some of their similarities and unique characteristics that differentiate them from one another.

2.4.1 TikTok's #BookTok

TikTok is a widely utilised social media platform owned by ByteDance, which was founded by Chinese entrepreneurs in 2017 (Mulroy, 2024). According to Etrata et al (2022) the demographic that uses TikTok the most is Generation Z. The people of this generation were born between 1997 and 2012 (Etrata, et al., 2022).

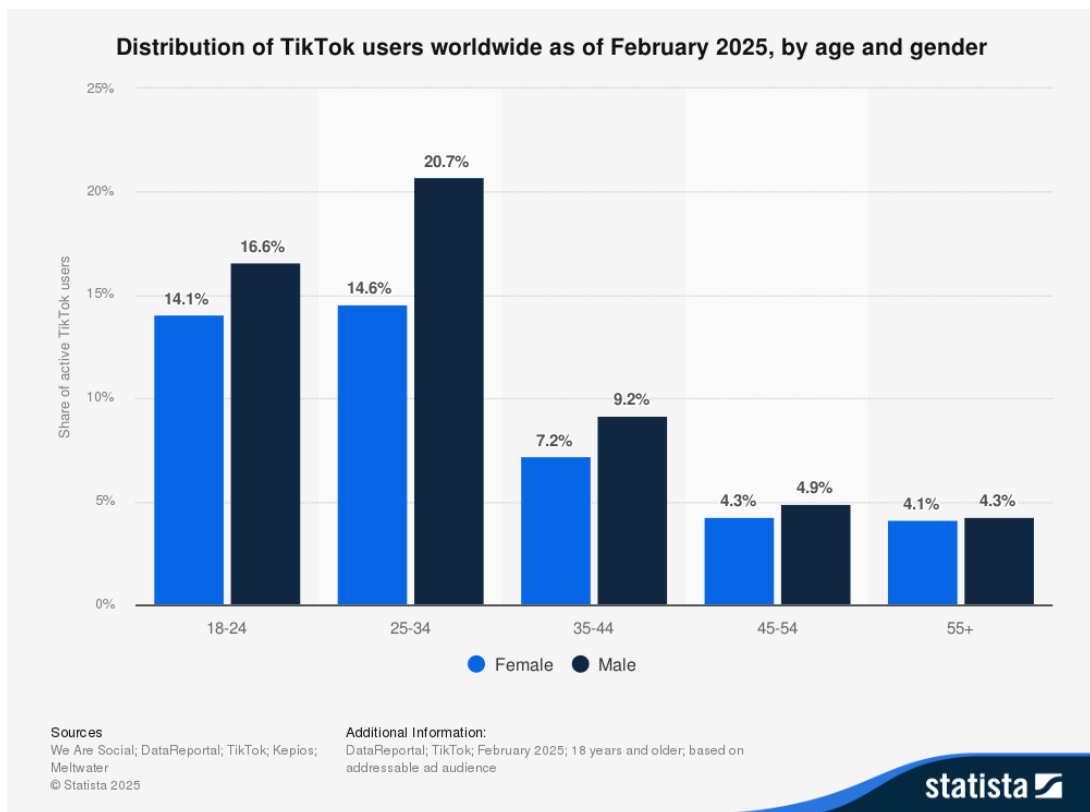


Figure 4. Distribution of TikTok users worldwide divided by gender and age groups in February 2025 (Statista; Laura Ceci, 2025)

According to Figure 4, the largest groups of TikTok users worldwide are 14.6% women and 20.7% men between the ages of 25-34 years old. The second largest groups of users are 14.1% women and 16.6% men between the ages of 18-24 years old. This chart, however, does not consider the users of TikTok who are under the age of 18. Around 25% of underage adolescents globally are users of TikTok them being between the ages of 10-19 years old (Master Mind

Behaviour, 2025). Though the ages that Master Mind Behaviour (2025) includes in the 25% 18-19 year olds who cannot be considered underage.

There are a lot of research articles discussing teenagers and TikTok; for example, Dera, Brouwer & Welling (2023) discuss how and to what for ninth graders would use TikTok's BookTok. The study was conducted as a survey with the target audience of 142 ninth-grade participants, who were mostly around the age of 15 years old. The results of the survey showed that 85.2% of the 142 participants were active users of TikTok (Dera, et al., 2023). The application rose in popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 when people were in lockdown and forced to stay home (Mayashine, 2022; Balling & Martins, 2024) . According to Statista (2025) in February of 2025, TikTok was the fifth most popular social network with 1.590 million monthly users worldwide (Statista; Stacy Jo Dixon, 2025). On TikTok, book or literature-related content and discussions can be found under the hashtag BookTok.

BookTok is a subcommunity in TikTok, a corner for avid readers in which users can share their opinions and connect with each other about anything book-related (Balling & Martins, 2024; Mayashine, 2022; Szklarzewska, 2024). In 2025, the under #BookTok has around 69.1 million posts from users. Dina Mayashin (2022) writes that "With BookTok, users may share their favourite books, recommend titles, authors, and genres, and make literary inside jokes. Various TikTok users have taken advantage of this platform to share their love for reading and share their recommendations" (Mayashine, 2022). The primary demographic of users and authors active on BookTok consists of people from Generation Z and Millennials, particularly women (Wall, 2023; Wolfe, 2022).

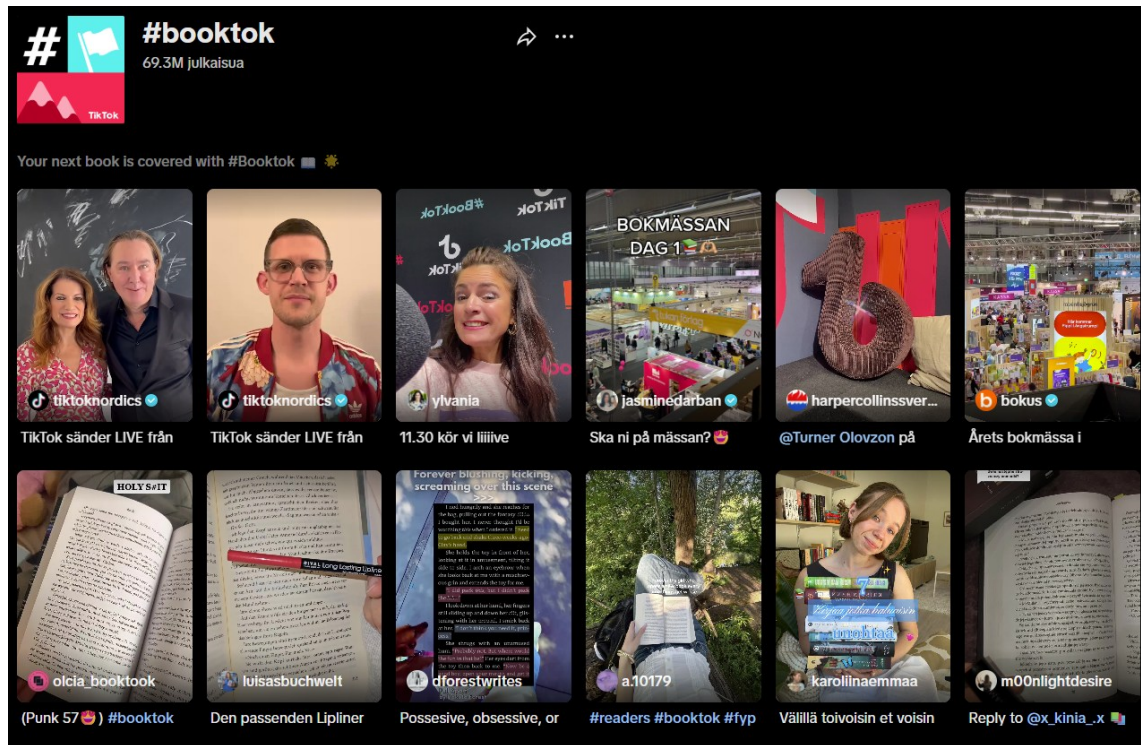


Figure 4. Screenshot of what type of posts are under #booktok (TikTok, 2025)

From the screenshot in Figure 5, it is displayed that there are 69.3 million posts under the hashtag of BookTok as of November 2025 (YouTube, 2025). As for the posts that came up first, including the book fair event video, and others, what is seen from the thumbnails seems to have open books shown on them.

While users can share their interests, individual authors on TikTok have been able to share and promote their current and upcoming book titles and interact with the readers in the community. The success of these promotions and title discoveries has resulted in movie and TV adaptations (Jalal, 2024). A particularly prominent example is Colleen Hoover's "It Ends With Us," a bestseller romance book that handles the heavy subject of domestic violence in a relationship (Portée, 2023). The book title was the best-selling in 2023 with unit sales of 1.29 million, and her other title, "It Starts With Us" came second with 1.24 million (Statista; Amy Watson, 2024). According to Alex Portée (2023) Colleen Hoover mentioned in an interview that the story of the book is loosely inspired by her parents' relationship (Portée, 2023). The book gained traction in book communities, BookTok, and Bookstagram, five years after it was first

published, in August 2016, and is set to be released digitally at some point (Mercuri, 2024). Other books have movie adaptations in process as according to Delores Curys: “Books like “The Song of Achilles,” “It Ends With Us” and “The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo” are among the numerous other BookTok books currently in the process of being adapted for the screen mainly because of their popularity on the app” (Curys, 2023). It could be concluded that the books that attract interest from readers on social media and garner attention for the author's popular book provide an opportunity for a movie or drama adaptation.

2.4.2 YouTube's BookTube

YouTube's community for book lovers and readers is called BookTube. “The BookTube community is an online community that began during the 2010s, which grew out of the YouTube vlogging trend” (Perkins, 2017). YouTube has copied TikTok's short video format success by naming their YouTube Shorts while also offering its original longer-duration video format, up to full-length feature films (Bookzapper, 2023; Dillon, 2025).

Influencers who focus on literature content on BookTube are called BookTubers (Bookzapper, 2023; Arnone, 2021; Tomasena, 2019). This is similar to how the creators of BookTok are called BookTokers. The platform of YouTube offers BookTubers and readers to make longer videos, enabling in-depth and insightful book reviews, recommendations, and vlogs involving the BookTuber recording the reading process of a certain book or listing their “TBR,” meaning “to be read” are books that will be read in the future (Bookzapper, 2023; Perkins, 2017, p. 353).

formats,,

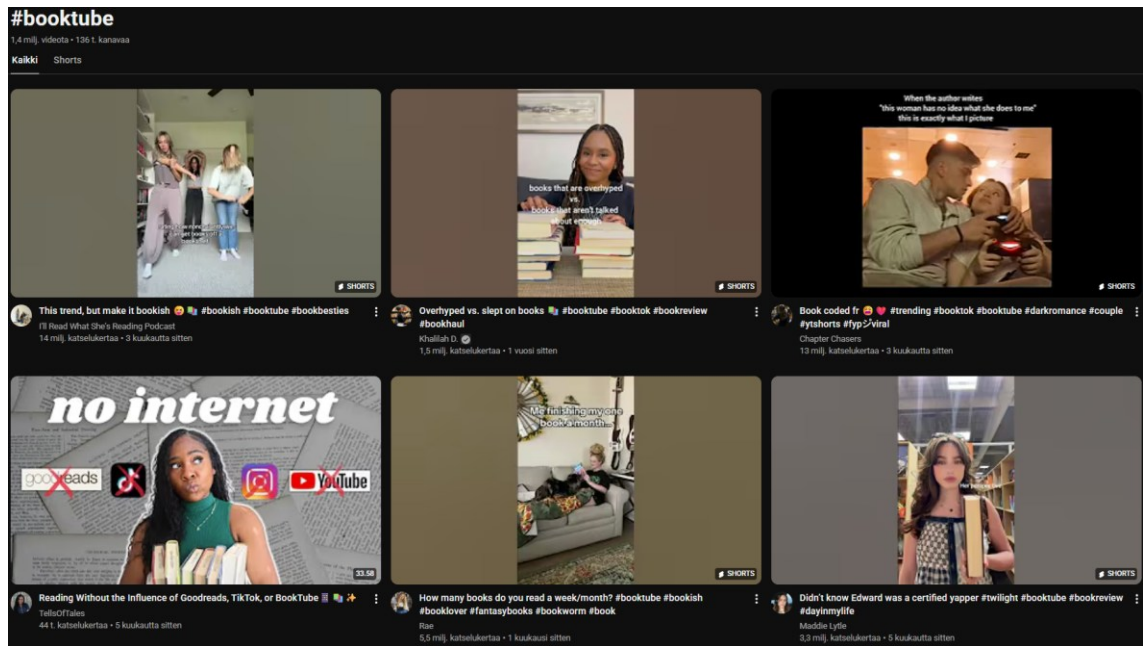


Figure 5: Screenshot from YouTube, what kind of posts are under #booktube (YouTube, 2025)

The YouTube (2025) screenshot above displays what type of posts came up at the top when entering the hashtag #booktube in the search on YouTube. As it can be observed only from this, the possibility of short videos is evident, similar to TikTok's BookTok, and as one longer video has an experiment of reading books without any online book communities' recommendations. In November 2025, the time the screenshot was taken, there were approximately 1.4 million videos and 136 thousand channels that had used the hashtag of BookTube.

When writing about BookTubers, Tomasena (2019) notes that despite the focus on young adult literature, BookTubers also focus on other genres like horror. Although Perkins (2017, pp. 352-353) notes that before this evolution in content, BookTubers mainly created book reviewing videos. The clear difference is the length of videos when comparing BookTok and BookTube. While longer videos provide in-depth analysis of the books, they also consume time, in contrast to the consumer on BookTok, who can scroll through many videos and get similar content faster (Arnone, 2021). Arnone (2021) also notes and suggests that while the faster consumption of content takes less time, the quality of the

content consumed on BookTok could be lower. Martens et al. (2022) write that the book recommendations on BookTok are more based on strong emotion than the intent of making content, as the environment there does not put the pressure to be formal with their thoughts on the books. Another difference is that BookTok frequently brings back recognition and even hype for older books. In contrast, BookTube focuses on more recent books, to some extent a key differentiating factor between the two subcommunities (Arnone, 2021).

2.4.3 Instagram's #Bookstagram

Bookstagram is a book community just like BookTube and BookTok, but located in the social media application Instagram. Instagram is more of a gallery-type social media platform owned by Meta since 2012 (Jaakkola, 2023). Bronwen Thomas (2021) describes the posts seen under #bookstagram as aesthetic photos that feature the book as the central focus, with the background matching the book's colour scheme, or that include props to create an aesthetic image of what the reading person enjoys while reading a book. Like YouTube, which

copied TikTok's successful format, Instagram has a short video format on its platform called Reels (Dillon, 2025).

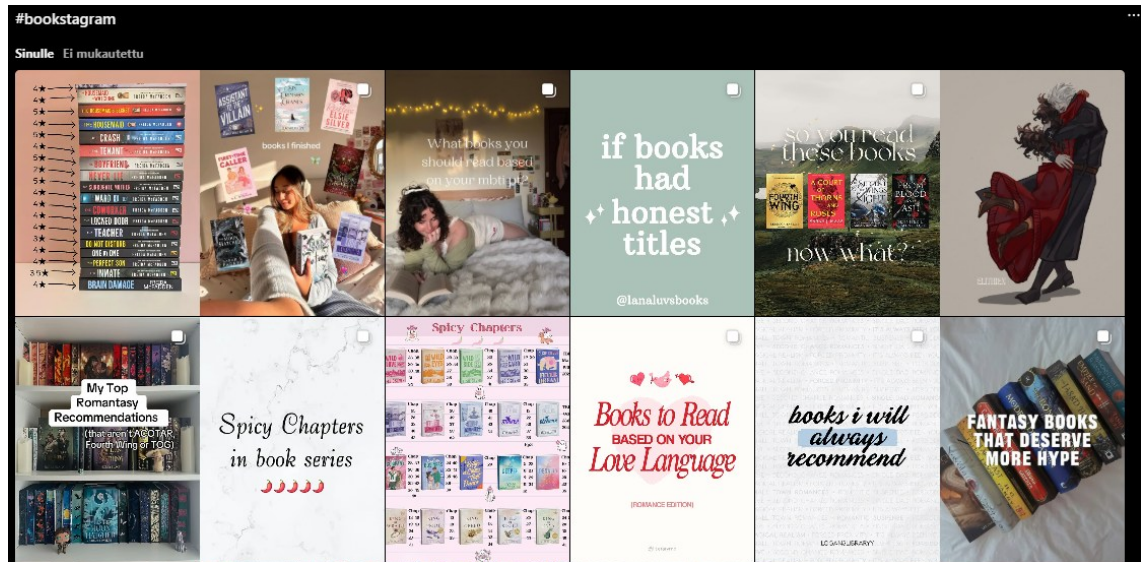


Figure 6. Screenshot from Instagram, what type of posts are under #bookstagram

As seen in Figure 6, Instagram (2025) allows searching the community's hashtag, which is a gallery-like form, and when observing the posts seen there are mainly book recommendations based on tropes and genres by users in the Bookstagram community. These posts are like what Thomas (2021) describes to be aesthetic and full of colour. Sunggyung Jo (2022) in an article, discusses how this post on Bookstagram provides a hint of what creators themselves are like, and especially what books they read, also tells information about them.

2.5 Pros and Cons of Book Formats

In the digital era, books are published in various forms, including traditional printed paper books, e-books that can be accessed by downloading a PDF file or through an online service, and audiobooks, which are similar to e-books but are in audio form (McGuire, 2022). Each form of the books is different with certain characteristics. This variety of options offers the reader a chance to choose what they prefer. As Dexin Zeng (2021) states, "A reader can switch

between traditional hardcover copies and environmentally friendly e-books/audiobooks” (Zeng, 2021). Both physical and digital books have their pros and cons, which probably would affect the consumer's decision on what format suits them the best.

The first discussion point is the sustainability and environmental friendliness of paper books and digital books. As Zeng (2021) mentioned before, e-books and audiobooks are claimed to be environmentally friendly, though Zeng does not specify in any detail why. According to Welle (2024) E-books and audiobooks are sustainable, only because they don't require paper, though they require digital devices, whose materials aren't easily recyclable. Materials and components that these devices require are batteries, which, as mentioned by Welle (2024) have lithium and other non-environmentally friendly materials.

When it comes to paper books, the production of the paper is what has the most impact on the environment. The trees are the main raw material to produce the paper that is used in books (Welle, 2024). Some book publishers have taken action to recognise the impact that paper production has on the environment. For example, Penguin Random House, a UK book publishing company, recognises that the environmental impact of paper is 40% of their carbon footprint, and to reduce their overall 90% carbon footprint, they must work together with their suppliers, and the type of paper used in production matters (Penguin Random House, 2025). Additionally, Penguin Random House (2025) writes on their website that “Our goal is to reduce carbon emissions by 50% by 2030, compared to our 2018 baseline”. Among other things, it seems that the company is taking accountability and many other actions in its operations to reduce emissions.

The space and accessibility that paper and digital books require are different. Paper books are physical and require space to be stored, while digital versions like e-books and audiobooks require space on a device and possibly an application, which requires digital space. E-books and audiobooks are possible to store on one or many devices, for example reader's phone, which can store a

library of their own digital books and be accessed anywhere they go (McMaken, 2025; Errera, 2024). Welle (2024) and McMaken (2025) both explain that e-books require the device that the reader uses to be charged, which consumes electricity as it happens continuously during the life cycle, for example, of an e-reader device.

The third point is more about consumers' overall experience with each book's format. As with paper books, the print is set to a specific font size in comparison with e-books on an e-reader includes a setting that with the reader to change the font characteristics to their preference (McMaken, 2025). Similarly, accessibility to the overall experience for the reader can be easier with e-books and audiobooks, as they are portable to be carried with them everywhere they go (Errera, 2024; McGuire, 2022). Audiobooks, though, do not require any form of seeing them visually, as the reader can listen to them while doing other daily activities at the same time (McGuire, 2022).

With paper books, the overall experience, according to Errera (2024) and McGuire (2022) is on how their physical form provides the reader to be able to remember them better due to their visual appearance, including colours and fonts on the covers, along with other characteristics.

It should be noted that this section leaves out the mention of prices for each book format, though it is understood that they would limit the reader consumers' choices of what they can purchase.

2.5.1 Digital piracy of e-books and audiobooks

Finland's Copyright Information and Anti-Piracy Centre (2025) defines the term internet piracy as "unauthorised consumption and distribution of copyrighted material on the Internet for public use" (Tekijänoikeuden tiedotus- ja valvontakeskus, 2025). In other terms, piracy is copyright infringement that involves intellectual property theft from publishers and authors who contribute their creativity to wider society (Rooney & White, 2018; Gudiničius & Grigas, 2021).

In the digital era, the book industry and other industries, for example, the music industry, which have their products and services available digitally online, fall victim to digital pirates who will then illegally distribute these (Zimmerman, Martin, 2011; Gudinaičius & Grigas, 2021). This could mean that e-books and audiobooks that are available digitally are possibly at risk of being obtained without purchasing them legally. Even though piracy is a crime of obtaining copyrighted material illegally, Zimmerman (2011) in his research writes that while the threat is high with e-books, it seems that it comes not only from hackers but also individuals with no means to take similar action who obtain instead via search for the pirated material from the internet.

When discussing the audiobooks piracy situation, Kozłowski (2025) claims that audiobook piracy has risen because of how easily these can be accessed with no cost on YouTube. These are not necessarily the original audiobook that sold online with a specific narrator, but instead books that are read out loud utilizing an AI narration software like ElevenLabs (Kozłowski, 2025). This means that people can obtain their audiobook-like experience without having to purchase anything, even while possibly knowing it is not the legal way.

When discussing the legal side of piracy, Sigit Ardianto (2022) identifies three problems about book piracy, though these possibly apply generally to the whole world, which are first due to the lack of public awareness among consumers that everything that is provided should be accessible to everyone without no restrictions, and ignoring the important legal fact that piracy is illegal. Not having the legal awareness of what piracy does could also come from a lack of knowledge of why it is wrong, despite being easy. However, Rooney and White (2018) strongly claim that anyone ignorant of the fact of piracy and utilising it to their benefit is supporting the violation of intellectual property rights.

To quote Zimmerman (2011, pp. 70-71, 74) there are still advanced hackers who, despite knowing their wrongful actions, are willing to challenge these restrictions and actions that are taken to protect digital copyrighted materials.

Ardianto (2022) continues with the second problem, that the simple acts of piracy, of copying written material, often result in some users offering it online by selling the copyrighted material. Similarly, as mentioned by Kozlowski (2025) authors discussed that even material that is written can be pirated with the help of an AI to online platforms for everyone to access and consume.

The third problem Ardianto (2022) explains is the lack of strong law enforcement on piracy, as people still obtain books and other materials in their own self-interest without having consideration for how their action of copyright infringement harms the original creators. When analysing book piracy on a legal basis and how Covid-19 affected the book publishers' sales in Indonesia, Ardianto (2022) concludes that:

“The Covid 19 pandemic has worsened the National Book Industry. Publishers experienced a decline in sales of physical books in offline/ off line stores. While sales on online channels are overshadowed by the problem of piracy” (Ardianto, 2022, p. 199).

Rooney and White (2018) state that piracy of books notably affects sales, but also every author's income, as every time someone accesses their book without purchasing it the legal way, which would bring in sales. The lost sale its effect on the author's income is demotivating, as their hard work of creativity has the risk of not getting compensated because the possibility of piracy exists (Rooney & White, 2018).

3 Research methods

3.1 Methodology

The research of this thesis uses qualitative research methods to describe and analyse the phenomenon of digitalisation of the book industry and how consumers, such as readers, behave in the market and on social media.

The objective of qualitative research is to enable observation, understanding, and interpretation of the information surrounding the phenomenon. Usually, the phenomenon is unknown or requires deeper understanding, and there is a limited number of sources discussing it when using qualitative research methods (Kananen, 2008).

Qualitative research enables the use of many materials as sources, though Kananen (2008) does mention that conducting research only based on written material and documented data is questionable and lacks reliability (Kananen, 2008, pp. 61-62). For this reason, the data collection was done in a way that compared or combined the sources' points of view to support each other. Kananen (2008) also explains the importance of quality, as in qualitative research, the quality references and sources should be paid attention reliability of some non-scientific material is questionable, even though it is possible to use them. The thesis aimed to focus on this, though it utilised some materials that weren't done by scholarly or professional researchers, but kept in mind to check if the sources provided a list of references. Some did include one at the end of their text, and some didn't.

3.2 Data collection

Most sources used for the research of the thesis are secondary, already existing information, including scholarly journals, articles, statistical results, and interview reports, to provide an understanding of the topic and the phenomenon. Though primary research for data in the literature review was done with screenshots of each book community's hashtags to support and draw conclusions on a surface level

During the research of the search words included: social media and influencer marketing, online book communities such as BookTok, BookTube, Bookstagram, TikTok's influence on sales and consumers. These sources provide insight to the changes in the publishing industry during the digital era

and how online book communities on social media could influence sales and consumer behaviour.

Other sources for a more theoretical perspective include discussion of marketing and consumer behaviour and analysis theory, which provide the basis for the analytical framework employed to evaluate the uses and impacts of the various social media platforms featured in the thesis.

3.3 Limitations

The study of the thesis relies on the qualitative research method of analysis and interpretation based on data that has already been researched by other researchers and news articles. There is a risk of overgeneralisation since secondary research brings different results when compared to primary research, which would enable the possibility of new data and answers to the research. Recommendation is that if this thesis's research is used as a source or reference, the reader is encouraged to utilise it with considerations of its limitations and reliance on secondary research. Another recommendation is to delve into the sources used in the thesis to gain a better understanding topics brought up in the thesis.

4 Findings and discussion

Results of the literature review discuss the topics that the research identified to answer the research questions are COVID-19- book sales, discussing how the sales of paper and digital books changed.

4.1 Covid-19 book sales

As discussed in the literature review paper and digital books are different from one another, the first section discusses and analyses book sales from the COVID-19 pandemic and forecasting future sales results, how each book formats popularity was measured through the worldwide market, and as an

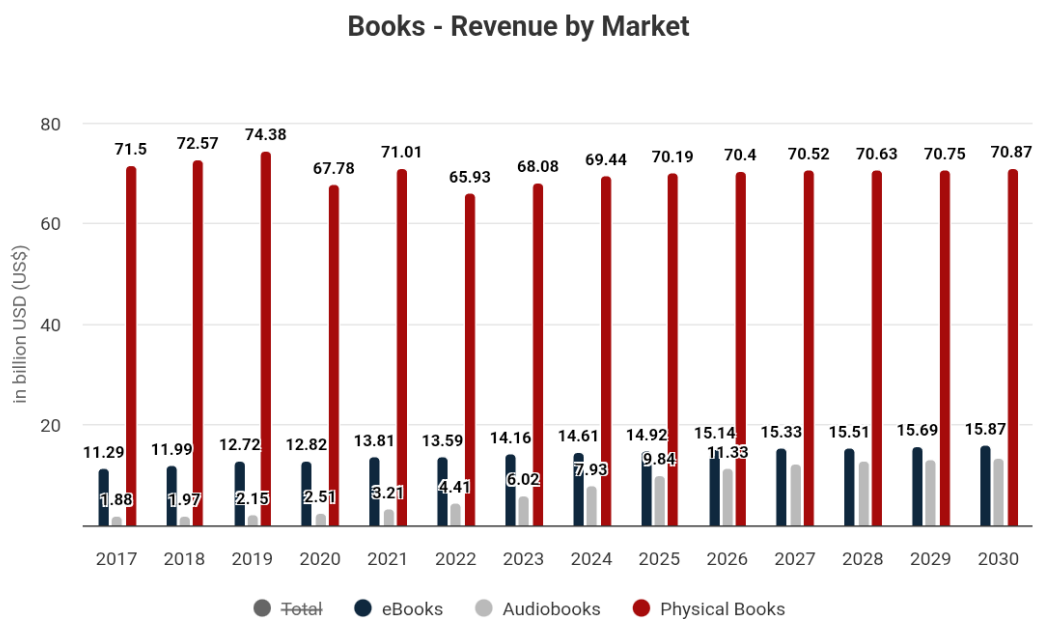
example, the United States market. The analysis is based on charts of book market revenues by Statista Market Insights. The interest in discussing COVID-19 book sales is relevant because during the lockdown, people relied on digital appliances more than ever in their daily life activities (Polyakova, et al., 2024).

As a reminder, the first research question was:

Q1. How has the digital era changed the book publishing industry?

After the literature review, the focus of the question turned to focus on sales of each book format, and reviewing them on a surface level, rather than going into deeper levels of detail.

4.1.1 Analysis of Worldwide Sales



Source: Statista Market Insights



Figure 7. Book market revenue by each book format market Worldwide, 2017-2030 (Statista Market Insights, 2025a)

In Figure 7 Statista Market Insights (2025a) showcases the revenue of each book format's sales in their own markets Worldwide.

First, paper book sales will be discussed. Between 2017-2025, paper book sales didn't go through dramatic changes from 2017-2024, and Statista Market Insights (2025a) forecast predicts that they will remain stagnant until 2030. Though during the years of the pandemic, there has been a noticeable decrease in 2020 and 2022, when the sales revenue was at its lowest, 65.95 billion dollars, compared to 2019, when it was 74.38 billion dollars. Otherwise, the sales revenue of paper books has been approximately over 70 billion dollars, as during 2021 it was previously 71.01 billion dollars.

Comparatively, according to Statista Market Insights (2025a) to chart e-book sales have been steadily growing ever since 2017, when the sales revenue in the market was 11.29 billion dollars, and in 2024, around 14.61 billion dollars. Forecasting by Statista estimates the growth will be steady, meaning yearly growth between 0.10 to 0.99 billion dollars in sales until 2030. When analysing possible changes, e-book sales revenue had decreased to its lowest in 2022, being 13.59 billion dollars (Statista Market Insights, 2025a). E-books during 2019-2020, around the time of the Covid-19 pandemic, there was the smallest change of 0,10 billion US dollars, but with later years, it has risen steadily until 2024.

With audiobook sales, there has been a significant development in the demand, as from 2020, yearly sales revenue has grown. From 2017 to 2024, the sales revenue of the worldwide audiobook market has grown 6.05 billion dollars from 1.88 billion dollars to 7.93 billion dollars. The sales forecast predicts revenue in the market will grow to 13.30 billion dollars. These can indicate that consumers in the market have slowly started to drift towards audiobooks instead of other formats of paper and e-books as the options have increased (Statista Market Insights, 2025a).

Overall, the demand for paper books, e-books, and audiobooks during recent years and in the future is predicted to have continuous growth. It could be concluded that demand in the worldwide books market has been affected by the

growing popularity of both e-books and audiobooks, while alongside the paper books have unchangingly kept their popularity.

4.1.2 Analysis of United States sales

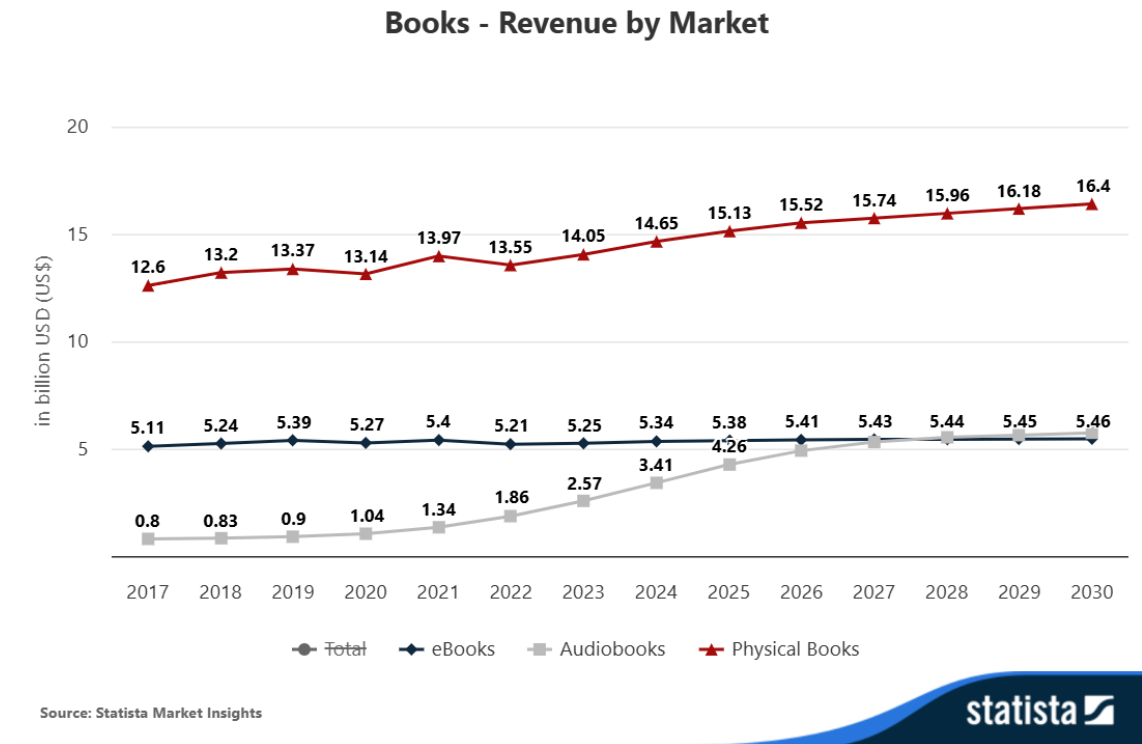


Figure 8. Book market revenue by each book format market in the United States, 2017-2030 (Statista Market Insights, 2025b)

In Figure 8, the chart displays book market revenue in the United States, similar to what the previous analysis on a worldwide scale. In the United States, the e-book market's sales revenue experienced steady growth and remained similar from 5.11 billion dollars in 2017 to 5.34 billion dollars in 2024. The forecast of the e-book market is predicted to grow similarly until 2030. In comparison to the worldwide book market, the overall sales revenue in the United States is growing. The significant growth is in the audiobook market since 2019; the growth of sales revenue has clearly continued increasing. This seems to have been happening during the time of COVID-19 and even after its end (Statista Market Insights, 2025b).

4.2 Influence online book communities

4.2.1 Positive Influence of Sense of Community

The second section of the discussion findings aims to answer the second research question of how TikTok's BookTok has influenced readers as consumers and book-related businesses, such as libraries and bookstores. The second research question is below as a reminder:

Q2. How has TikTok's BookTok influenced consumers and book-related businesses?

As discussed in the literature review, BookTok, an online book community, has enabled users and authors alike to share and connect passionately about books and their related topics. As Balling and Martins (2024) write, despite being the newcomer when compared to BookTube and Bookstagram, the chaotic and passionate energy of the content enables less pressure to participate for everyone to participate in the discussion. The literature review primarily discussed how normal users and more influential users engage with each other, sharing their opinions, ideas, lists, and overall passion for the books they have either read or plan to read. As Balling & Martins (2024) write about how online platforms like BookTok enable interactions of everyone in the book market, as "The accessibility of these digital spaces allows readers to engage in dialogue with authors and publishers, offering a unique opportunity for interaction and connection" (Balling & Martins, 2024).

The sense of community in these online book communities has enabled everyone can participate, including readers, authors, and book-related businesses like libraries and bookstores (Balling & Martins, 2024). BookTok has lowered the bar of participation that participants of the book publishing market

have taken notice of and started to participate more, by creating similar content based on popular trends and following what characteristics of a book are popular among readers (Beeck, 2023; Merga, 2021). Merga (2021) in her article states that BookTok has provided libraries with an opportunity to keep up to date with which books and authors are popular among younger readers, and with the information, consider new book additions to attract them. Additionally, Mayashine (2022) also agrees that BookTok has brought readers who are searching for social media's trending books to their local libraries, and these libraries are faced with an opportunity to understand and plan to demand from their reader customers. If action is taken to meet the demand, it would mean that readers would possibly be more likely to rely on the various libraries' collections to be able to read the trending books instead of purchasing it themselves (Mayashine, 2022).

In the case of book stores, there has been a positive response to how BookTok has increased the visibility of their business after the hard work of monitoring hashtags, sharing what books offer, and the location to attract readers as potential customers (Beeck, 2023).

Beeck (2023) by observing and researching three bookstore accounts on BookTok, found work hard on managing what hashtags they use in the posts and making their own strategies, some of which have resulted in reaching many users. Each of the researched bookstores had examples of their successes, including having individuals come visit the stores since they had seen their social media, finding authors' books that would suit the store's book collection, and gaining a two-way beneficial partnership with a cafe nearby business aiming to provide authors a place to promote their books (Beeck, 2023).

4.2.2 Negative Influence of Overconsumption

Although BookTok and other online book communities like BookTube and Bookstagram have had a positive influence and impact, resulting in more reading and people being interested in books and other products, they also

have negative effects. Most mentioned is the overconsumption of products (Schmidt, 2023) and books aren't an exception. Overconsumption from TikTok's influence has caused people to buy unnecessary products because they are trendy at a certain point in time.

Most videos that show possible signs of overconsumption are influencers showing their biggest book haul ever, where they showcase newly bought books with their huge personal library behind them (Seaman, 2024). Seeing this, the people who watch these videos also want to keep up with upcoming new books and recent discussions of their favourite book content influencers. Baltodano (2024) brings up a point that the overconsumption of books comes from BookTok participants' idealising the act of reading as an aesthetic. This can also be seen in the Bookstagram posts, where a book or books are in an aesthetic formation with props, as discussed by Thomas (2021) in the literature review.

Similar to BookTok, YouTube's BookTube community also has pressures to overconsume, especially books, as Britton (2021) writes that the hobby of reading with all the new book hauls and excessive amount of owned books, can make viewers feel like the hobby is more like a competition of who is the best reader or bookworm (Britton, 2021). This pressure can be demotivating to the viewers who are also readers and might feel inferior and pressured to keep up with the constant boom of new popular books. Britton (2021) adds that this pressure to overconsume isn't friendly to the environment, as she discusses that usually the books that the booktuber shows in their videos are paper books (Britton, 2021). This brings up the second thing to discuss that most of these have is that most books of this overconsumption are bought new from bookstores and not thrifted or borrowed from libraries (Seaman, 2024). This brings up the hidden cost that not all consumers who purchase products while being influenced by TikTok trends might not notice. As mentioned in the literature review paper, books require paper from trees, and their production into books has an impact on the environment (Penguin Random House, 2025; Welle, 2024).

Seaman (2024) concludes with advice and encouragement that people should read and possibly buy books that they enjoy and like for the sake of reading, and not be pressured by how other readers do on social media (Seaman, 2024). People should follow their own evaluation of their options for purchasing a book and not blindly chase the trends and aesthetics (Seaman, 2024) of what an idealistic reader should be.

5 Conclusion

This thesis's research discussed the book publishing industry during the digital era and how many things have book communities on social media can influence consumers and their overall behaviour when interacting and purchasing products.

Literature review first discussed the basics of marketing, the 4Ps (product, price, place, and promotion) by focusing on books as a product in the market and consumer mentality when it comes to their behaviour and purchasing decisions.

Second, to support the research, more social media uses and benefits were discussed, finding that it would be a useful tool in a company's marketing planning and to understand their target consumers.

Third, discussing the online book communities of BookTok, BookTube, and Bookstagram on how all platforms have their own characteristics while sharing similar communities with a core value of passionate book discussion and recommendations on what to read next.

Fourth and last section of the literature review compares paper books to the digital form of e-books and audiobooks. Paper books and digital book productions both have an impact on the environment, the former requiring paper from trees, and the latter requiring devices that have toxic materials, harmful to the environment. A reader can take one book with them, while digital books

offer them the possibility to travel with their whole personal library on a device, though with the risk of limited battery life. The section also takes notice of how piracy is a problem and how digital forms of books fall victim to hackers who share them online, and people using AI to create unofficial audiobooks on YouTube.

The first section of findings analysis on book sales of each format found that physical books are still popular, while in COVID-19, they experienced decreases in sales, as e-books stayed quite stagnant with of increase, and audio book sales increased worldwide and in the United States. Forecasts showed that the audiobooks market continues to gain popularity among reader consumers.

In the second section of findings, it was found that TikTok's BookTok has had a positive influence by bringing a new community for readers, authors, and the books business alike, with no pressure to join in on the discussion, though on the negative side, it has brought readers pressure to keep up with hype and trends of books and other products. This pressure for some leads to somewhat blind action of overconsumption without considering and evaluating the necessity of the purchase. While others realise it and recommend doing a thorough evaluation of options to obtain the book.

Overall, digitalisation has brought a lot of things to the book publishing industry in the form of social media, having readers and book-related businesses being passionate and interacting in book communities. Each reader has various forms to choose from based on their preferences. Be it by purchasing the product or through some other ways that only benefit them, not the authors and publishers.

References

Almaida, A., Wahda & Osman, I., 2021. Allied Business Academies - Parasocial relationship, customer equity, and purchase intention. *Journal of Management Information and Decision Sciences*, 15 May, Vol. 24(Issue 6), pp. 1-14.

Alvarez-Monzoncillo, J. M., 2023. *The Dynamics of Influencer Marketing*. Abingdon, New York: Taylor & Francis.

American Marketing Association, 2025. *American Marketing Association - Marketing Definitions*. [Online]

Available at: <<https://www.ama.org/topics/marketing-definition/>> [Accessed 2 April 2025].

Ardianto, S., 2022. Legal Analysis Of Book Piracy. *International Asia Law and Money Laundering*, September, Vol. 1(No.3), pp. 198-199. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59712/iaml.v1i3.34>.

Arnone, C. M., 2021. *BookRiot - BookTube vs. BookTok: Which Account Should You Start?*. [Online]

Available at: <<https://bookriot.com/booktube-vs-booktok/>> [Accessed 2 October 2025].

Balling, G. & Martins, M., 2024. BookTok Helped Us Sell It: How TikTok Disrupts Publishing and Fuels the #Romantasy Boom.. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 0(0), pp. 1-21 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565241301271>.

Baltodano, V., 2024. The Kindle Ecosystem of Overconsumption: The Digital Flâneuse Roaming BookTok e-Spaces. *Markets, Globalization & Development*

Review, Vol. 9(No. 4), pp. Article 2. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.23860/MGDR-2024-09-04-02>>.

Beeck, N. o. d., 2023. *Publisher Weekly - Booksellers Add TikTok to the Toolbox*. [Online]

Available at: <<https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/bookselling/article/93201-booksellers-add-tiktok-to-the-toolbox.html>> [Accessed 24 November 2025].

Biobaku, M., 2009. *Marketing Strategy in Book Publishing*. [Online]

Available at:

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/386868559_Marketing_Strategy_in_Book_Publishing>

[Accessed 2 April 2025].

Bookzapper, 2023. *Medium - booktube vs booktok which one suits you-best*. [Online]

Available at: <<https://medium.com/@bookzapper/booktube-vs-booktok-which-one-suits-you-best-f7829e96e665>>

[Accessed 10 December 2023].

Britton, A., 2021. *The Independent - Feeling Pressured To Read? The Toxic Side Of Booktube*. [Online]

Available at: <<https://www.independent.co.uk/feeling-pressured-to-read-the-toxic-side-of-booktube/>>

[Accessed 28 October 2025].

Bush, R., 2023. *Lived Places Publishing - How a Book is Made*. [Online]

Available at: <<https://livedplacespublishing.com/blog/book-production-process/?srsltid=AfmBOooEQDRV1BYFVxOi9znpJt9XEISjASNB5AVPI5XnbXaFzmKm4UsS>>

[Accessed 26 September 2025].

Campbell, C. & Farrell, J. R., 2020. More than meets the eye: The functional components underlying influencer marketing. *Business Horizons*, 2020(Vol. 63), pp. 469-479. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2020.03.003>.

Chaffey, D. & Ellis-Chadwick, F., 2015. *Digital marketing: strategy, implementation and practice*. 5th Edition ed. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Curys, D., 2023. *Cavalier Daily - BookTok-to-screen: Why Hollywood is looking to TikTok for streaming service successes*. [Online]
Available at: <<https://www.cavalierdaily.com/article/2023/11/booktok-to-screen-why-hollywood-is-looking-to-tiktok-for-streaming-service-successes>>
[Accessed 4 April 2024].

Dera, J., Brouwer, S. & Welling, A., 2023. #BookTok's appeal on ninth-grade students: An inquiry into students' responses on a social media revelation. *International Literature Association*, Vol. 67(Issue 2), pp. 99-110. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.1303>.

Dillon, C., 2025. *Bimeo Digital Solutions - Why Other Social Media Platforms Copied TikTok (And Are They Working)*. [Online]
Available at: <<https://bimeodigital.com/why-other-social-media-platforms-copied-tiktok-and-are-they-working/>>
[Accessed 19 November 2025].

Dominyka, V., Vilte, A. & James, R., 2023. The impact of social media marketing on new venture performance. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, Vol. 28(No. 5), pp. 788-810. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/CCIJ-11-2022-0137>.

Errera, R., 2024. *Toner Buzz - Printed Books vs eBooks Statistics, Trends and Facts [2025]*. [Online]
Available at: <<https://www.tonerbuzz.com/blog/paper-books-vs-ebooks-statistics/>>
[Accessed 24 November 2025].

Etrata, A. J., Araujo, C. J. G., Perater, K. A. S. D. & Quicho, A. M. V., 2022. Influence of TikTok Video Advertisements on Generation Z's Behavior and Purchase Intention. *International Journal of Social and Management Studies*, Vol.3(No.2), pp. 140-152. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5555/ijosmas.v3i2.123>.

Freberg, K., Freberg, L. A. & Mcgaughey, K., 2011. Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality. *Fuel and Energy Abstracts*, Vol. 37(Issue 1), pp. 90-92 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2010.11.001>.

Gudinavičius, A. & Grigas, V., 2021. Causes and consequences of unauthorized use of books: readers, authors, and publishers' perspective. *Online Information Review*, Vol. 46(No. 5), pp. 886-903. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/OIR-03-2021-0133>.

Halonen, M., 2019. *Vaikuttaja Markkinointi*. Helsinki: Alma Talent.

Hawkins, L., 2023. *The rise of virtual influencers and what it means for customer engagement*. [Online]
Available at: <<https://www.cxnetwork.com/artificial-intelligence/articles/the-rise-of-virtual-influencers-and-what-it-means-for-customer-engagement>>
[Accessed 1 April 2025].

Instagram, 2025. *Instagram - For You page*. [Online]
Available at:
<<https://www.instagram.com/explore/search/keyword/?q=%23bookstagram>>
[Accessed 18 November 2025].

Jaakkola, M., 2023. The Revival of Book Reviews in Social Media: BookTok, BookTube and Bookstagram as communities for literary evaluations. *International Leads*, Vol. 37(No. 4), pp. 14-16.

Jain, V., Schultz, D. E. & Sheth, J., 2019. *Consumer Behavior : A Digital Native*. 1st ed. Uttar Pradesh: Pearson Education India.

Jalal, M., 2024. *The National News - After It Ends With Us, here are more BookTok hits getting adapted for the screen.* [Online]

Available at: <<https://www.thenationalnews.com/arts-culture/books/2024/09/05/films-based-on-booktok-novels/>>

[Accessed 27 March 2025].

Jo, S., 2022. 'You are what you read': beside a book, beside a self. *Textual Practice*, Vol. 37(No. 6), pp. 941-958 DOI: <https://doi-org.ezproxy.metropolia.fi/10.1080/0950236X.2022.2059551>.

Kananen, J., 2008. *Kvali - Kvalitatiivisen tutkimuksen teoria ja käytänteet.*

Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän ammattikorkeakoulu.

Kenton, W., 2025. *Investopedia - Marketing Mix: The 4 Ps of Marketing and How to Use Them.* [Online]

Available at: <<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/marketing-mix.asp>>

[Accessed 5 November 2025].

Kotler, P., Opresnik, M. & Armstrong, G., 2021. *Principles of Marketing Global Edition.* 7th ed. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Kozlowski, M., 2025. *Good E Reader - Digital Audiobook Piracy is on the rise, thanks to YouTube..* [Online]

Available at: <<https://goodereader.com/blog/audiobooks/digital-audiobook-piracy-is-on-the-rise-thanks-to-youtube>>

[Accessed 21 November 2025].

Kuluttajaliitto, 2025. *Kuluttajaliitto.* [Online]

Available at: <<https://www.kuluttajaliitto.fi/materiaalit/kuluttajansuojan-abc/>>

[Accessed 3 April 2025].

Lin, C. A. & Rauschnabel, P. A., 2016. Social media platforms as marketing channels. *Encyclopedia of E-Commerce Development, Implementation, and Management*, Volume 154, pp. 2144-2158. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-4666-9787-4.ch154>.

Lin, H.-C., Bruning, P. F. & Swarna, H., 2018. Using online opinion leaders to promote the hedonic and utilitarian value of products and services. *Business Horizons*, Volume 61(Issue 3), pp. 431-442. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2018.01.01>.

Martens, M., Balling, G. & Higgason, K. A., 2022. #BookTokMadeMeReadIt: young adult reading communities across an international, sociotechnical landscape. *Information and Learning Sciences*, Vol. 123(No. 11-12), pp. 705-722. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/ILS-07-2022-0086>.

Master Mind Behaviour, 2025. *Master Mind Behaviour - TikTok Statistics, Facts & User Demographics*. [Online]
Available at: <<https://www.mastermindbehavior.com/post/tiktok-statistics-facts-user-demographics>>
[Accessed 29 May 2025].

Mayashine, D., 2022. From the horse's mouth: BookTok as a collection development strategy in academic libraries. *College & Research Libraries News*, Vol. 83(No.10), pp. 459-462. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5860/crln.83.10.459>.

McGuire, H., 2022. *The Medium - What are different book formats good at?*. [Online]
Available at: <<https://hughmcguire.medium.com/what-are-different-book-formats-good-at-263dfb907b02>>
[Accessed 13 March 2025].

McMaken, L., 2025. *Investopedia - E-Books vs. Print Books: Which Should You Choose?*. [Online]
Available at: <<https://www.investopedia.com/financial-edge/0812/e-books-vs.-print-books.aspx>>
[Accessed 29 October 2025].

Mercuri, M., 2024. *Forbes - When Will 'It Ends With Us' Be Streaming On Netflix And Digital?*. [Online]
Available at: <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/monicamercuri/2024/08/10/when->

will-it-ends-with-us-be-streaming-on-netflix-and-digital/>

[Accessed 4 April 2025].

Merga, M. K., 2021. How can Booktok on TikTok inform readers' advisory services for?. *Library and Information Science Research*, Vol. 43(Issue 2), pp. 1-10. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2021.101091>.

Mulroy, C., 2024. *USA TODAY - Who owns TikTok? Parent company ByteDance in spotlight amid possible US ban*. [Online]

Available at: <<https://eu.usatoday.com/story/tech/2024/06/18/who-owns-tiktok-bytedance/73691106007/>>

[Accessed 9 November 2024].

Penguin Random House, 2025. *Penguin Random House - Journey to Net Zero*. [Online]

Available at: <<https://www.penguin.co.uk/about/social-impact/our-recent-impact/journey-to-net-zero-2>>

[Accessed 22 November 2025].

Perkins, K., 2017. The Boundaries of BookTube. *The Serials Librarian*, Vol. 73(Issue 3-4), pp. 352-356. DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.1080/0361526X.2017.1364317>.

Peter, J. P. & Olson, J. C., 2008. *Consumer Behaviour & Marketing Strategy*. 8th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill/Irwin cop.

Polyakova, V., Streltsova, E., Iudin, I. & Kuzina, L., 2024. Irreversible effects? How the digitalization of daily practices has changed. *Technology in Society*, Volume 76, pp. 1-14 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techsoc.2023.102447>.

Portée, A., 2023. *Today - Why Colleen Hoover says it's 'bittersweet' that 'It Ends With Us' has been a bestseller for so long*. [Online]

Available at: <<https://www.today.com/popculture/books/colleen-hoover-it-ends-with-us-domestic-abuse-rcna91742>>

[Accessed 3 April 2025].

Rooney, M. & White, J., 2018. *Independent Publishing Magazines - How Internet Pirates Affect Authors and the Publishing Industry – Jack White | Guest Post*. [Online]

Available at: <<https://theindependentpublishingmagazine.com/how-internet-pirates-affect-authors-and-the-publishing-industry-jack-white-guest-post>> [Accessed 3 April 2025].

Rusdian, S., Sugiat, J. & Tojiri, Y., 2024. Understanding Consumer Behavior in Marketing Management: A Descriptive Study and Review of Literature. *Golden Ratio of Marketing and Applied Psychology of Business*, Vol.4(Issue 2), pp. 76-87. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52970/grmapb.v4i2.416>.

Schmidt, L., 2023. *WMEAC - Influencing and De-Influencing: How TikTok Promotes Overconsumption*. [Online]

Available at: <<https://wmeac.org/2023/06/influencing-and-de-influencing-how-tiktok-promotes-overconsumption/>> [Accessed 2025 October 2025].

Seaman, A., 2024. *My problem with book influencers*. [Online]

Available at: <<https://www.michigandaily.com/arts/books/my-problem-with-book-influencers/>> [Accessed 13 November 2025].

Statista Market Insights, 2025a. *Statista Market Insights - Books Worldwide Market*. [Online]

Available at: <<https://www-statista-com.ezproxy.metropolia.fi/outlook/amo/media/books/worldwide>> [Accessed 23 November 2025].

Statista Market Insights, 2025b. *Statista Markets Insights - Books United States Market*. [Online]

Available at: <<https://www-statista-com.ezproxy.metropolia.fi/outlook/amo/media/books/united-states?currency=USD>> [Accessed 23 November 2025].

Statista; Amy Watson, 2024. *Statista - Best-selling print books in the United States in 2023, by unit sales*. [Online]

Available at: <<https://www-statista-com.ezproxy.metropolia.fi/statistics/324911/best-selling-trade-paperback-books-usa/>>

[Accessed 4 April 2025].

Statista; Laura Ceci, 2025. *Statista - Distribution of TikTok users worldwide as of February 2025, by age and gender*. [Online]

Available at: <<https://www-statista-com.ezproxy.metropolia.fi/statistics/1299771/tiktok-global-user-age-distribution/>>

[Accessed 7 April 2025].

Statista; Stacy Jo Dixon, 2025. *Statista - Most popular social networks worldwide as of February 2025, by number of monthly active users*. [Online]

Available at: <<https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>>

[Accessed 31 March 2025].

Szklarzewska, A., 2024. *The Yale Daily News - How is the popularity of BookTok impacting the publishing industry?*. [Online]

Available at: <<https://yaledailynews.com/sjp2024/2024/10/09/how-is-the-popularity-of-booktok-impacting-the-publishing-industry/>>

[Accessed 13 March 2025].

Tekijänoikeuden tiedotus- ja valvontakeskus, 2025. *Nettipiratismi*. [Online]

Available at: <<https://ttvk.fi/piratismi/nettipiratismi>>

[Accessed 2025 April 2025].

The Happy Self-Publisher, 2021. *The Happy Self-Publisher - The 4Ps of Book Marketing*. [Online]

Available at: <<https://happyselfpublisher.com/4-ps-of-book-marketing/>>

[Accessed 26 October 2025].

Thomas, B., 2021. The#bookstagram:distributed reading in the social media age. *Language Sciences*, 2021(Vol. 84), p. 5. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2021.101358>.

TikTok, 2025. *TikTok - Hashtag BookTok*. [Online]
Available at: <<https://www.tiktok.com/tag/BookTok>>
[Accessed 25 November 2025].

Tomasena, J. M., 2019. Negotiating Collaborations: BookTubers, The Publishing Industry, and YouTube's Ecosystem. *Social Media + Society*, 31 December, Vol. 5(No. 4), pp. 1-12 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305119894004>.

Wall, N., 2023. *How BookTok trends are influencing what you read – whether you use TikTok or not*. [Online]
Available at: <<https://theconversation.com/how-booktok-trends-are-influencing-what-you-read-whether-you-use-tiktok-or-not-213311>>
[Accessed 4 April 2025].

Welle, D., 2024. *The Daily Star - Paper book or e-reader: Which is better for the planet?*. [Online]
Available at: <<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/world/news/paper-book-or-e-reader-which-better-the-planet-3552696>>
[Accessed 5 November 2025].

Wolfe, E., 2022. *The Michigan Daily - The narrative of BookTok*. [Online]
Available at: <<https://www.michigandaily.com/statement/the-narrative-of-booktok/>>
[Accessed 3 April 2025].

YouTube, 2025. *YouTube - Hashtag BookTube*. [Online]
Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/hashtag/booktube>>
[Accessed 25 November 2025].

Zeng, D., 2021. *The Medium - Is the Publishing Industry Dead in the Digital Era?*. [Online]

Available at: <<https://medium.com/digital-society/is-the-publishing-industry-dead-in-the-digital-era-157566c80b69>>

[Accessed 4 April 2025].

Zimmerman, Martin, 2011. E-books and piracy: implications/issues for academic libraries. *New World Library*, Vol. 112(No. 1,), pp. 67-75. DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.1108/03074801111100463>.

