



BookTok: A Marketing Revolution? - looking at how BookTok (the book community on TikTok) has impacted book sales and marketing strategies for publishers and authors

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Abstract

In the introduction, the researcher evaluated the impact of BookTok by analysing the background, problem statement, aim and objective of the research. Besides this, the researcher also examined the significance of the research by focusing on the usage of the study for future researchers. Chapter 2 of the research is about the literature review, where the variables of the research were described with a detailed overview. In this chapter, the researcher used a “*diffusion of innovations theory*” by aligning with the literature review of the research.

Chapter 3 outlined the research methodology, employing Saunders’ Research Onion. It details the interpretivism philosophy, deductive approach, explanatory design, and secondary data collection through thematic analysis. Ethical considerations under GDPR 2018 ensure data integrity, while random sampling enhances qualitative insights into BookTok’s marketing influence on authors and publishers. Chapter 4 of the research described the findings and discussions of the research by analysing different research articles and other researchers, followed by developing a comparison and contrast to the discussions in the literature review. Chapter 5 evaluated how BookTok enhances book sales and author visibility while facing challenges like content disinformation.

It also connected the research objectives to literature themes and highlighted limitations. Future research should explore diverse genres and other platforms. Recommendations included diversifying promotional strategies and prioritising inclusivity to foster broader engagement.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

BookTok is a community of TikTok users, who feel passionate about books and literature. Through this niche community of social media, readers around the world theorise and review their favourite books, genres,

recommendations and authors. The researcher in this research explored the revolutionaries raised with the impact of BookTok and its impact on global authors and publishers.

1.2 Background

BookTok, a subcommunity of TikTok, has had a rapid since 2020, which has influenced the publishing industry and reading trends of the young generation (Jerasa and Boffone, 2024). As per the data of November 2023, over 200 million times views were experienced in the #BookTok hashtag on TikTok, which expressed the publicity of the tool (Barkley Economic Review, 2024). The authors of BookTok sold 13 million copies in 2020, and the next year, the amount jumped to 27 million (Barkley Economic Review, 2024).

According to a survey result of 2023, 80% of the participants responded that they were reading more books as a result of BookTok (Watson, 2023). As per a survey, 62% of TikTok users from the US have read at least one book of their choice in BookTok (Curcic, 2024). The biggest reading activity due to BookTok is recorded in Marine with the presence of 80% of the users reading more after using BookTok (Curcic, 2024). Thus, the impact of BookTok is clearly visible in enhancing the reading activities of the young generation.

1.3 Problem Statement

The authors and publishers in the publishing industry face challenges like market saturation, technological disruptions, and economic challenges with rising production costs. In this challenging ground of selling books, the rise of BookTok has proven as a powerful tool to attract over 112 billion views besides boosting book sales for trending titles (Nadeem, 2024). The publishers report a 300% increase in sales for titles as the impact of BookTok (Nadeem, 2024).

However, several issues have been faced by BookTok, like disinformation, content piracy, and limited inclusivity in non-Anglophone literature, where 68% of users reported limited diversity, impacting reader perception and choice of the tool (Asplund *et al.* 2024). Thus, 40% of the authors reported lower sales through the challenge, and 70% of publishers recognised over-reliance on trending titles, limiting the opportunities for unpopular works (O'Callaghan and Haldron, 2021).

1.4 Aims and Objectives

Aim

The aim of the research is to analyse the impact of BookTok on book sales besides examining its approach to revolutionised marketing strategies for authors and publishers.

Objectives

- To analyse the impact of BookTok on consumer purchasing behaviour and book sales trends.
- To explore the ways in which authors and publishers have adapted their marketing strategies to leverage BookTok's popularity.
- To assess the role of BookTok in shaping the visibility and success of both established and emerging authors.

1.5 Research Question

- What is the impact of BookTok on consumer purchasing behaviour and book sales trends?

- What are ways used by authors and publishers used for marketing strategies to leverage BookTok's popularity?
- What is the role of BookTok in shaping the visibility and success of both established and emerging authors?
- What marketing strategies can author and publishers use to engage BookTok effectively?

1.6 Research Significance

The research will be significant, as through this, the future researcher will be able to collect specific data related to the topic of this particular research. As the researcher utilised a survey method in this research, the future researcher can delve a deeper knowledge about the specific impact of BookTok on the publishers and authors.

1.7 Dissertation Structure

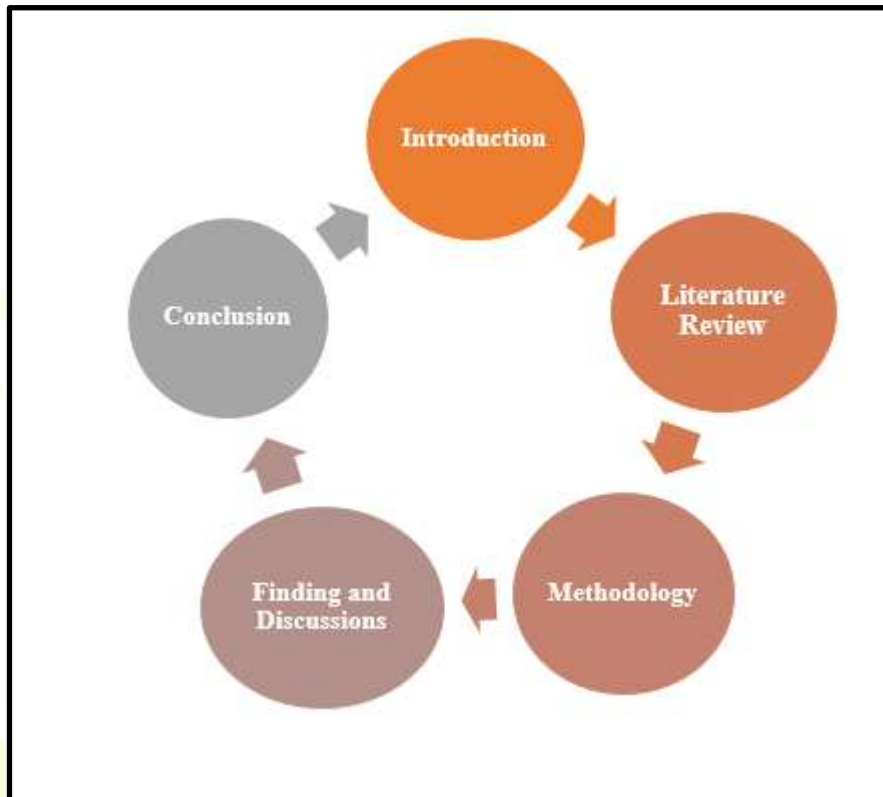


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

(Source: Author)

1.8 Summary

Chapter 1 of the research discussed the impact of BookTok on revolutionaries in the marketing method of book sales. Besides this, it also discussed the marketing strategies of the publishers and authors. The researcher in this chapter introduced the background and research problem of the study along with the significance, aim and objectives of the research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

BookTok has significantly transformed consumer purchasing behaviour and shaped the marketing strategies in the publishing industry. This platform facilitates dynamic engagement between readers, authors, and publishers, driving

sales trends while also highlighting the challenges of genre limitations and the need for innovative marketing approaches.

2.2 Impact of BookTok on consumer purchasing behaviour and book sales trends

The purpose of reading internet reviews is threefold: to increase productivity, decrease risk, and strengthen community spirit (Bu *et al.* 2023). Both organisations and researchers might benefit from understanding consumer incentives for participating in electronic word-of-mouth, as highlighted in the article. Magdalena Hofman-Kohlmeyer and M. Hofman-Kohlmeyer edited the 2019 edition of Management and Quality. There was also a gender gap in the study; males are more likely to think carefully before buying eBooks as presents, while women are more likely to buy eBooks on a whim. Title, summary, topic, recommendation (Li *et al.* 2023). In order to improve marketing and sales tactics, the results may help eBook retailers and marketers tailor their plans to match customer demands.

Cultural, societal, individual, and psychological factors are investigated in this research as they pertain to the acquisition of physical eBooks (Khadragy *et al.* 2022). To explore the relationships between these characteristics and consumer buying behaviour, the research uses multiple regression analysis to test hypotheses and standard assumption model analysis for model analysis. Results from a poll of 315 people show that customers are more likely to buy physical eBooks when certain cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors are considered (Khadragy *et al.* 2022). This data may help eBook publishers and merchants better understand their customers' buying habits by allowing them to tailor their strategies and marketing campaigns to meet their specific needs.

2.3 Authors and publishers' marketing strategies for book communities' popularity

TikTok focuses on short films accompanied by catchy music and sound effects. The app stands apart from other social media platforms because of its vast user base and several distinct subcultures (Delemos, 2021). Users are guided to material that interests them by the algorithm, trends, and hashtags, so there's no need to seek a specific audience. Video material on TikTok is concise enough to hold users' attention, subcultures and groups are easily discoverable using the app's algorithm and hashtags, and the content is real, hilarious, relevant, and authentic without being judgemental or stilted. TikTok is a popular app that brings together the greatest parts of YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, drawing in a large and youthful user base (Shutsko, 2020).

According to Jerasa and Boffone (2021), as a kind of owned media, content marketing allows businesses to promote themselves by producing and sharing engaging and useful material on social media. Instead of attempting to sell clients anything, content marketers should concentrate on what customers want and need. Companies use social media to advertise and sell things, while consumers use it to interact and relax. This may explain why social media marketing may be tough for them.

2.4 Role of book community in shaping the visibility and success of both established and emerging authors

There is a lot more preliminary evaluation work that books editors conduct. They are interested in learning the book's writing quality, the amount of effort that will go into publishing it, and whose intellectual circles may be interested in reading it (Bu *et al.* 2023). A manuscript's merit and the editor's time commitment to a particular book are two factors that must be considered. Because editors come from a variety of academic backgrounds, they are always on the lookout

for papers that might spark discussions in other areas (Li *et al.* 2023). A preliminary acceptance may be extended by the majority of editors after a positive evaluation. Upon receipt of a finalised manuscript, the majority of academic presses and a large number of commercial publishers will have the original reviewer and another reviewer go over it again (Khadragy *et al.* 2022). If the first review is bad, the publisher is less likely to be interested. Editors of books aren't as concerned with compiling a range of evaluations as journal editors are, unlike in journal publications, where a negative review might be balanced out by two consecutive favourable ones (Khadragy *et al.* 2022).

2.5 Theory

The diffusion of innovations theory attempts to explain why the new ideas and practices are adopted, including why adopting new ideas can be spread out over long periods. This was introduced by Everett Rogers and aligned well with the impact of BookTok on book sales and marketing strategies (García-Avilés, 2020). In this context, the first stage of “*innovation*” refers to the use of TikTok for promoting the book through engaging and focusing on the viral content. “*Communication channels*” include short-form videos shared by creators, influencing readers' choices. “*Time*” plays a key role, as BookTok's growing popularity has driven publishers and authors to adopt it in their marketing efforts (Okour *et al.* 2021). The “*social system*” involves a community of readers, influencers, authors, and publishers, creating trends that significantly affect book sales and reshape marketing dynamics for the industry.

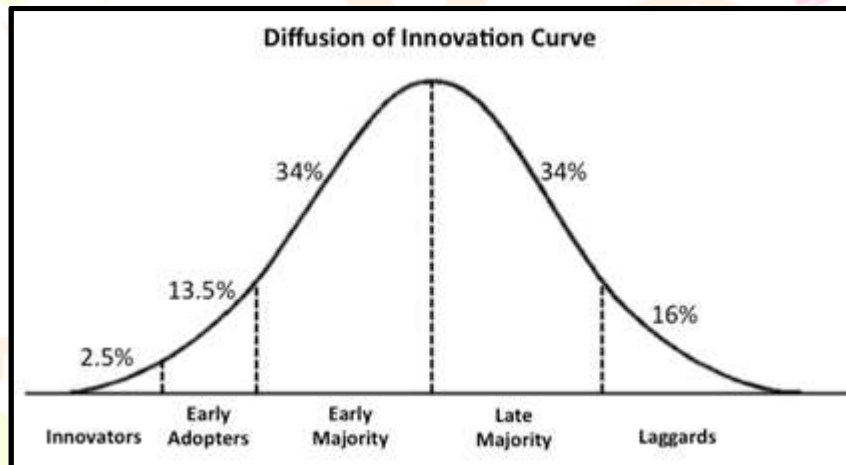


Figure 2.1: The Diffusion of Innovations Theory

(Source: García-Avilés, 2020)

2.6 Research Gap

Despite the growing influence of BookTok on book sales and marketing, limited research explores its specific impact on publishers' and authors' marketing strategies. The main research gap focuses on the lack of detailed analysis based on BookTok-specific influences the marketing strategies of publishers and authors.

2.7 Summary

BookTok has reshaped the publishing landscape by influencing consumer purchasing behaviour as well as marketing strategies. Although it has increased the sales for specific genres, particularly romance and young adult fiction, it also presents challenges, such as genre limitations and the need for diverse recommendations.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 of the research discussed the methodology of the research by utilising Saunder's Research Onion, along with the research philosophy, approach, data collection method and ethics of the research. The researcher also discussed the way of collecting qualitative data related to the research.

3.2 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy is defined as the set of beliefs and assumptions that guide the researcher for a better research study (Kirongo and Odoyo, 2020). In this research, the researcher used the interpretivism research philosophy. This philosophy helped the researcher to understand BookTok's influences on authors and publishers for marketing strategies to experience better community-driven engagement.

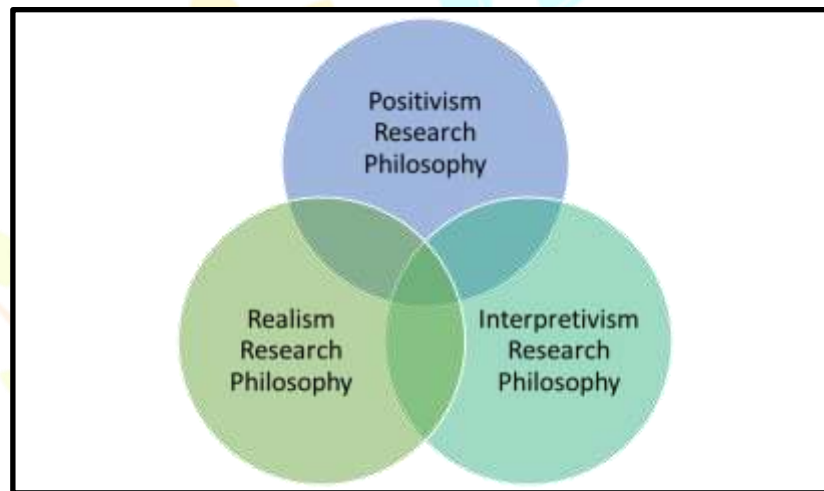


Figure 3.1: Research Philosophy

(Source: Kirongo and Odoyo, 2020)

3.3 Research Approach

The research approach refers to a set of procedures and plans that help the researcher to collect and analyse as well as interpret data (Mohajan and Mohajan, 2022). For conducting this researcher used the deductive research approach. The main reason for choosing this approach is to understand the BookTok's viral trends directly impact the specific marketing strategies and measurable book sales for publishers and authors.

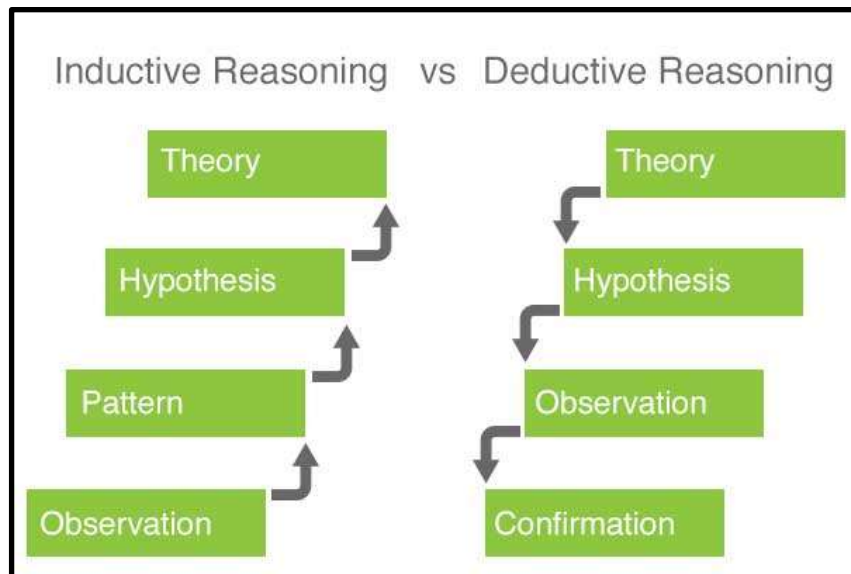


Figure 3.2: Research Approach

(Source: Mohajan and Mohajan, 2022)

3.4 Research Design

Research design is a framework that outlines the strategy and procedures for answering a research question. For this research, the researcher used an Explanatory research design (Muzari *et al.* 2022). BookTok has significantly increased book sales by driving viral trends, prompting publishers and authors to adopt TikTok-focused marketing strategies.

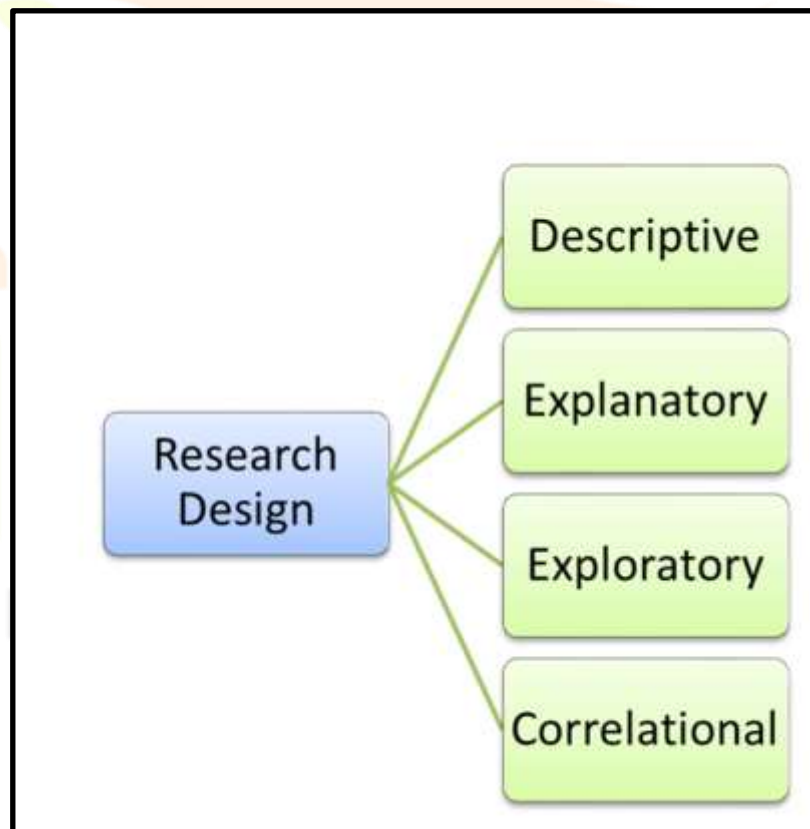


Figure 3.3: Research Design

(Source: Muzari *et al.* 2022)

3.5 Research data collection

Research data collection is a process used for gathering information from various sources to answer research questions and understand outcomes (Mazhar *et al.* 2021). For this research, the researcher had to use secondary data. The reason behind choosing this is to gather more insight and knowledge about BookTok and its influence.

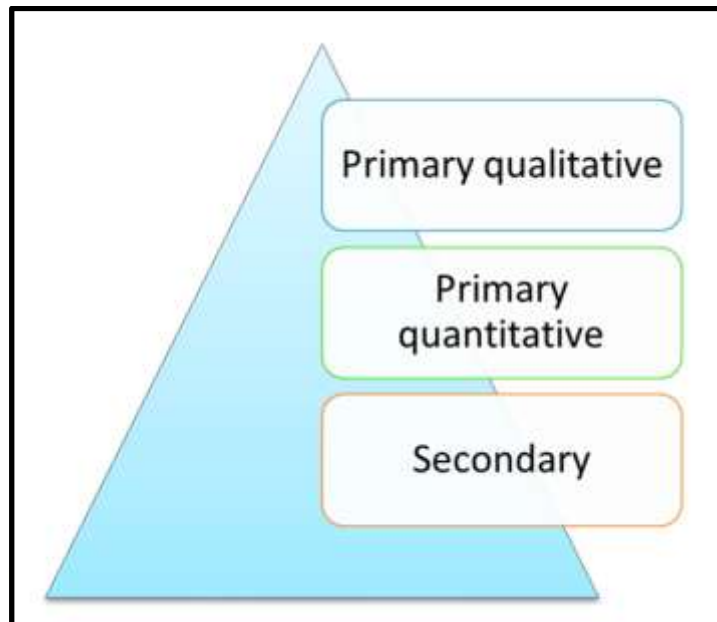


Figure 3.4: Data Collection

(Source: Mazhar *et al.* 2021)

3.6 Data analysis

Data analysis is a process of examining data, finding patterns with relationships and using the information to draw conclusions. The researcher had used the thematic analysis to conduct this research. The thematic analysis helped the

rese3.7 Prisma Table

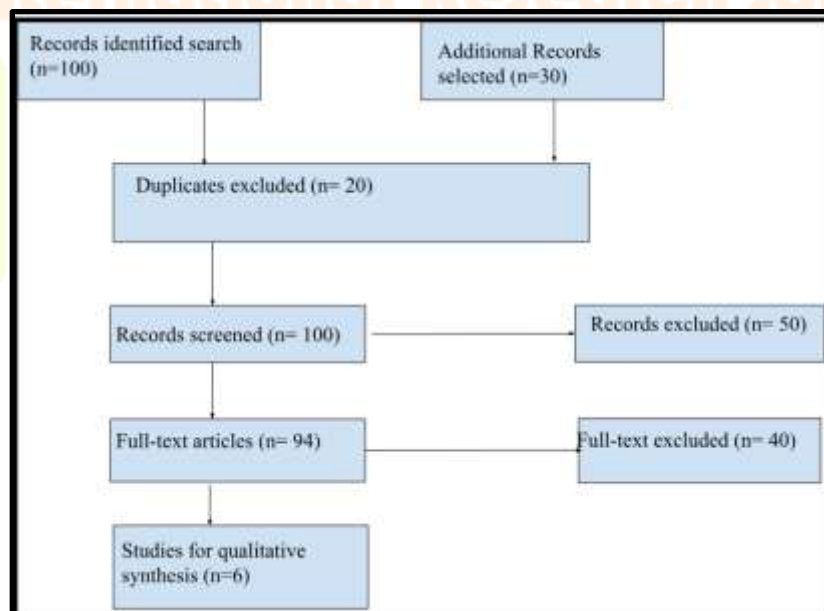


Figure 3.5: Prisma Table

(Source: Author)

3.8 Inclusive and Exclusive

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Population	Studies or articles discussing BookTok's impact on book sales	Content unrelated to TikTok or book marketing
Inventions	Research focused on TikTok as a marketing tool for authors and publishers	Articles focused on other platforms or non-book-related TikTok trends
Outcomes	Data or reports on consumer behaviour linked to BookTok	Opinions without supporting data or analysis
Study Types	Published studies from 2020 onwards analysing book promotion and social media	Articles published before 2020
Language	English	Non-English sources

Table 3.1: Inclusion and Exclusion

(Source: Author)

3.9 Boolean Operator

Criteria	Boolean Operators
Population	(BookTok AND book sales)
Inventions	(TikTok AND marketing strategies AND publishers AND authors)
Outcomes	(BookTok AND consumer behavior AND sales increase)
Study Types	(Studies OR reports AND published after 2020)
Language	(English) AND (NOT non-English)

Table 3.2: Boolean Operator

(Source: Author)

3.10 Research Ethics

Ethical consideration is a method of honouring a moral code by securing dignity and rights for all people, which aims to ensure the relevance of the process of the research. The researcher in this research ensured the authentication of data under GDPR 2018. Besides this, the researcher used to prevent plagiarism by collecting authentic data and honouring the actual researchers.

3.11 Summary

The research methodology examined the methods followed by the researcher in collecting and analysing data for this particular research. The researcher utilised a secondary thematic analysis to analyse the impact of BookTok. Along with this, the research philosophy, approach and design of the research were also examined by the researcher.

Chapter 4: Discussion and Findings

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 of the research described the findings and discussions of the research, where the researcher pointed out the findings of other researchers to discuss the impact of BookTok to originate a marketing revolution. In the part of the discussion, the researcher compares and contrasts the themes of the findings with that of the description of the researchers in the literature review.

4.2 Findings

Theme 1: The impact of BookTok on consumer purchasing behaviour

Author	Methods	Findings
Ridzuan and Ahmadrashidi (2023)	Primary method interview was used.	BookTok has significantly transformed consumer purchasing behaviour by creating viral demand for specific titles and significant surges in book sales. One of the key examples is the famous novel " <i>It Ends with Us</i> ", written by Colleen Hoover, a backlisted title that has gained immense popularity since 2021.
TikTok, (2024)	Secondary research method.	BookTok is a famous book dedicated subculture of TikTok, which has transformed young readers' engagement with literature. Publishers and booksellers have acknowledged this trend and gained popularity on BookTok.

Table 4.1: Theme 1

(Source: Author)

Theme 2: Authors and publishers marketing strategies for BookTok's popularity

Author	Methods	Findings
Tukia, (2022)	Qualitative research.	BookTok strongly influences the selling and marketing of books with its content regarding books. Businesses and influencers can benefit from the short, entertaining videos in their marketing

		strategies to gain awareness and reach potential customers.
Segarra-Saavedr and Torres-Huama, 2023.	Use of Interview Methods.	The BookTok reading community has led to the appearance of figures of book influencers who disseminate through their own channels and content their literary preferences for young users interested in reading.

Table 4.2: Theme 2

(Source: Author)

Theme 3**Role of BookTok in shaping the visibility and success of both established and emerging authors**

Author	Methods	Findings
Kulkarni, 2024	Secondary Qualitative Method	The research analysed the effective responses of the readers on BookTok by focusing on the dynamics of TikTok related to the economy and limitations, shaping the engagement of young readers with literature. Qualitative analysis allows the researcher to highlight the shared and generated emotional responses. Through this, the researcher offers perceptions for educators and reading promoters using a post-critical reading framework.
Guehring, 2023	Mixed method	The researcher explores the impact of BookTok on cultural curation and book sales by exploring 148 videos and interviewing creators. The study highlights the way TikTok's algorithms and platform features influence related to book recommendations. Through this, the tool contributes to the discussions on algorithms, digital culture and personalised content.

Table 4.3: Theme 3

(Source: Author)

4.3 Discussion

Theme 1

In theme 1 of the findings, Ridzuan and Ahmadrashidi (2023) discussed the transformed consumer purchasing behaviour of BookTok in creating viral demand for significant surges and specific titles of the research. Similarly, Bu *et al.* (2023) believe that e-books are meant to increase productivity, decrease risk, and strengthen community spirit. Li *et al.* 2023 in the literature review, described the presence of a gender gap where males are more likely to think carefully before buying eBooks. Khadragy *et al.* 2022 in the literature review, expressed that customers are more likely to buy physical eBooks by considering certain cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors. Based on this comment, Li *et al.* (2023) described that marketing and sales tactics are improved through the significant impact of eBook retailers and marketers tailor their plans to match customer demands.

Theme 2

In theme 2 of the research, Tukia (2022) commented that the selling and marketing of books are strongly influenced by the contents of BookTok regarding books. He also added that influencers and businessmen could benefit from the shorts, which focus on entertaining videos in their marketing strategies. On the other hand, Delemos (2021), in the literature review, explored that the BookTok app is different from other social media platforms because of its several distinct subcultures and uncountable user base. Segarra-Saavedr and Torres-Huama (2023), in the literature review, described that the impact of the BookTok reading community has led to the appearance of figures of book influencers. The result led the influencers to disseminate through their own channels and content their literary preferences. Similarly, in the literature review, Jerasa and Boffone (2021) expressed that content marketing allows businesses to promote themselves by producing and sharing engaging and useful material on social media.

Theme 3

In theme 3, Kulkarni (2024) discussed the effective responses of the readers on BookTok by focusing on the dynamics of TikTok related to the economy and limitations. Besides this, it also highlights the shared and generated emotional responses. In the literature review, Khadragy *et al.* (2022) described that, unlike in journal publications, editors of books aren't as concerned with compiling a range of evaluations as two consecutive favourable ones might balance out journal editors and a negative review. Besides this, Bu *et al.* (2023), in the literature review, described the role of the book community in BookTok as like a manuscript's merit and the editor's time commitment to a particular book are two factors that must be considered.

4.4 Summary

Chapter 4 of the research discussed the findings and discussions of the research by evaluating the discussions of several other researchers besides comparing it to that of the researchers in the literature review. In this particular research, the researcher evaluated the impact of BookTok by creating three themes of the research of different authors.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion

BookTok significantly boosts book sales and author visibility, as well as challenges with content and disinformation and focuses on popular titles hinder broader literary representation. A balanced approach that promotes diverse works and mitigates misinformation can enhance the platform's effectiveness in the publishing industry.

5.2 Linking with Objectives

Objective one is linked with literature review theme 1 in the impact of BookTok on consumer purchasing behaviour. Objective two is linked with literature review theme 2, Authors and publishers' marketing strategies for BookTok's popularity. Objective three is linked with the literature review theme 3, and objective four has a closed linked with Chapter 5.

5.3 Research limitation

The study is limited to specific genres popular on BookTok that represent broader market trends. The research also faces constraints regarding participant diversity and potential biases in self-reported data from surveys and interviews.

5.4 Future Scope

Future research could understand the effect of the Booktok and its trends for diverse literacy genres and emerging authors. Investigating the role of other social media platforms in shaping reading habits and conducting comparative studies across different demographics could provide deeper insights into the evolving landscape of book marketing and consumption.

5.5 Recommendation

BookTok publishers should diversify promotional strategies by supporting niche genres and lesser-known authors, invest in content moderation to combat disinformation and prioritise inclusivity by featuring diverse voices (James, 2022). This approach will enhance visibility and broaden reader engagement across various demographics.



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