Persuasion Framing and Storytelling: BookTok's Influence on Young Adult and Adult Readers

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Abstract

BookTok, a TikTok sub community focused on books, influences the reading habits of both young adult and adult readers. As a participatory digital space, it reshapes traditional literary influence through emotional storytelling, aesthetic presentation, and persuasive framing.

Using content analysis of viral videos and a focus group with active users, the study examines how creators build trust and foster community through personal, emotionally resonant narratives. Younger readers often see BookTok as a space for identity exploration and peer connection, while adult readers tend to approach it more critically, using it for discovery but relying more on offline recommendations and maintaining selective reading preferences.

BookTok offers a compelling look at how digital platforms are transforming literary culture and reader engagement, revealing generational differences in how readers connect with online book communities.

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Introduction

Background

Reading communities in the United States have evolved from traditional book clubs into dynamic digital spaces that connect readers across diverse platforms. In their early days, in-person book clubs allowed readers to engage in discussions of texts in small, social groups, fostering interaction and shared learning (Ruhl, 2019; Petrich, 2015). Today, platforms like Goodreads, Instagram, and TikTok have reshaped these interactions, with digital communities such as #BookTok on TikTok driving significant engagement and influencing book sales through viral recommendations (Reddan, 2022; Jerasa & Boffone, 2021). This shift became especially significant during the COVID-19 pandemic, which prompted many readers to turn to online spaces for connection. Digital communities now offer new and engaging formats for literary discussion, from video reviews to curated book recommendations, establishing influential spaces for literary exploration and community building (Driscoll & Sedo, 2018; Martens, Balling, & Higgason, 2022).

The evolution of reading communities into dynamic digital spaces not only reshaped literary engagement but also intersected with broader trends in consumer behavior. These digital platforms, such as Goodreads and #BookTok, have become powerful drivers of consumer decision-making, particularly in the book market, where social proof and peer recommendations hold significant sway (Jerasa & Boffone, 2021; Reddan, 2022). Studies show that book sales are strongly influenced by viral content and online reviews, with platforms like TikTok playing a

crucial role in amplifying visibility and credibility for certain titles (Nielsen, 2019; Cheung & Thadani, 2012). As online reviews and social media recommendations increasingly guide purchasing choices, the influence of these literary communities exemplifies the broader psychological and social factors shaping consumer behavior in the digital age (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019).

Consumer buying behavior has become an increasingly complex process, influenced by psychological, personal, social, and economic factors that shape individual purchasing decisions. Psychological drivers such as perception, motivation, and beliefs play a key role in shaping attitudes toward brands, while personal elements like age, income, lifestyle, and personality define preferences (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019). Social influences, however, are particularly significant in today's digital landscape, where many consumers rely on peer reviews and recommendations from their social networks. Research shows that approximately 70% of consumers consult online reviews before making a purchase, demonstrating the impact of social proof and digital communities on buying decisions (Nielsen, 2019). Studies further suggest that consumers exposed to positive online reviews are more likely to develop favorable attitudes toward products, strongly influencing their purchasing behavior (Cheung & Thadani, 2012).

The rise of digital platforms has led brands to increasingly rely on data-driven insights to align marketing strategies with consumer behavior. By analyzing patterns in browsing history, past purchases, and social media activity, marketers can craft personalized campaigns that resonate with individual preferences (Solomon, 2020; Laudon & Traver, 2019).

This approach includes targeted advertising, customized product recommendations, and exclusive offers, all designed to boost engagement and foster brand loyalty. Data-driven personalization enhances marketing efficiency while also building consumer trust by offering relevant and tailored experiences (Dholakia, 2020). As a result, modern marketing strategies now depend heavily on predictive analytics and real-time data, allowing brands to better understand and anticipate consumer needs, which in turn cultivates long-term relationships and promotes informed purchasing behaviors.

In tandem with these data-driven marketing practices, strategic communication techniques have become equally critical for organizations navigating the complexities of the digital landscape. While data provides insights into consumer behavior, strategic communication translates these insights into impactful messaging and engagement efforts.

These techniques are essential for achieving objectives like brand-building, reputation management, and public engagement. By employing targeted strategies, communicators can reach diverse audiences, enhance brand perception, and build trust. Key techniques include audience segmentation, which allows for the crafting of tailored messages for different demographic or psychographic groups, thus maximizing impact and relevance (Smith, 2017). Additionally, storytelling serves as a powerful tool to create emotional connections with audiences, ensuring messages are memorable and relatable (Gill, 2021). The rise of social media has further transformed strategic communications, enabling real-time measurement of engagement and responsiveness to shifts in audience sentiment.

This adaptability makes communication more authentic and effective (Zerfass et al., 2018). Techniques like framing and two-way communication allow organizations to guide public perception, foster transparent exchanges, and adapt strategies based on feedback, thereby ensuring that communication efforts remain persuasive and impactful in an evolving media environment (Hallahan, 2015; Zerfass et al., 2018).

One such platform that has transformed communication, especially in the realm of entertainment and culture, is TikTok. Launched by ByteDance in 2016, TikTok has quickly become one of the world's most influential social media platforms, with over a billion active users globally. Known for its short-form videos, TikTok allows content creators to share everything from viral dance challenges to cooking tutorials, humor, and visual storytelling. Its features—ranging from 15 to 60-second videos paired with music and enhanced by various creative tools—have cultivated an environment ripe for self-expression and social engagement, particularly among younger audiences (Evans, 2024; Leaver et al., 2020).

Within TikTok's vast digital landscape, BookTok has emerged as a vibrant subculture centered around books and reading. Through short, dynamic videos, BookTok users promote, review, and discuss a wide variety of books, ranging from popular genres like fantasy and romance to niche topics, thereby creating a global literary network. The hashtag #BookTok, which has amassed more than 50 billion views worldwide (Reddan, 2022) showcases how this community has brought literature to the forefront of TikTok, transforming books into a central focus of digital interaction. Through content such as book hauls, bookshelf tours, curated reading lists, and

heartfelt reviews, BookTok fosters a sense of connection among readers, enabling them to discover new books and share their love of literature.

The rise of BookTok is deeply intertwined with the COVID-19 pandemic, which prompted many to seek virtual communities and new forms of entertainment during periods of social isolation. Driven largely by young women, the content produced by BookTok creators includes personal reflections, rankings of popular books, and recommendations, all of which have resonated with a wide audience. The interactive nature of TikTok has amplified the impact of these recommendations, sparking renewed interest in books and catapulting older, lesser-known titles back onto bestseller lists. Reddan (2022) observes that BookTok influencers bring a level of authenticity and relatability that has proven particularly effective in engaging their followers. Stewart (2021) further notes how this digital subculture has influenced book sales and literary trends, especially for titles that might otherwise have been overlooked.

By blending the social connectivity of traditional book clubs with the immediacy of digital media, BookTok has reinvigorated reading as both a cultural and social practice. Unlike face-to-face literary communities, BookTok operates within a global, virtual sphere where each post has the potential to reach millions. This amplifies its influence on literary trends and nurtures a strong sense of community among readers (Abidin, 2020; Reddan, 2022). As Obreja, Manolica, and Jelea (2024) note, BookTok not only allows readers to explore new authors and genres but also creates a welcoming space for a diversity of perspectives. Its user-centered approach fosters a "non-judgmental space for young people to freely read and engage with the

books they love—or love to hate," (Martens, Balling, & Higgason, 2022), creating a reading environment that is as communal as it is personal (Jerasa & Boffone, 2021; Stewart, 2021).

TikTok's influence extends beyond entertainment, serving as a cultural force that reshapes young audiences' interests and preferences. In this shifting landscape, BookTok exemplifies how social media can create engaging, literary spaces that foster meaningful connections among readers across the globe. BookTok not only champions books but transforms reading into a social, accessible experience that resonates across generations and backgrounds. As Martens, Balling, and Higgason (2022) highlight, "BookTok connects print and digital formats, offering innovative possibilities for young people's connected learning and reading promotion." Through its collective enthusiasm and the expansive reach of TikTok, BookTok demonstrates the transformative potential of digital spaces to revitalize interests in reading, promote literacy, and cultivate a new generation of readers in an ever-evolving cultural landscape.

Problem Significance

This study examines how BookTok, a thriving community on TikTok, transforms modern reading practices and exerts a profound influence on the literary market. By analyzing how peer-driven recommendations, viral trends, and user-generated content fuel a renewed enthusiasm for literature, the study highlights BookTok's pivotal role in reshaping how books are discovered, consumed, and marketed. It will also explore the broader cultural implications of this digital community, emphasizing its influence on consumer behavior, publishing trends, and the evolving dynamics of literacy in the digital age.

This research highlights the transformative power of digital platforms in creating engaged, global communities that redefine how we interact with literature while driving social change. By democratizing access to books and fostering diverse, inclusive discussions, platforms like BookTok are reshaping the cultural landscape. They not only influence which books gain popularity but also challenge traditional gatekeepers in publishing. In doing so, BookTok offers valuable insights into the future of reading communities, illustrating how digital spaces are transforming cultural consumption, promoting literacy, and building deeper, more inclusive connections among readers across generations and backgrounds. These findings can help publishers, authors, and marketers develop strategies to engage diverse audiences more effectively, ultimately fostering a more vibrant and inclusive book culture.

Problem Statement

To what degree has BookTok impacted book discovery and reading behaviors among its users? Is there a measurable connection between the volume of mentions or recommendations a book garners on BookTok and its subsequent sales performance? How substantial is the contribution of BookTok recommendations to the growth of book sales for the books featured on the platform?

The astonishing success of #BookTok has profoundly influenced the literary world, offering a much-needed boost to reading engagement in an era of declining literacy rates in many societies. While concerns about diminishing reading habits have been pervasive (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007), BookTok's unexpected rise as a thriving platform for bibliophiles has reignited enthusiasm for literature and storytelling. According to Reddan (2022), the platform's community-driven approach has led to an explosion of viral book recommendations, rekindling

interest in reading among a wide audience, particularly young adults. Moreover, Martens, Balling, and Higgason (2022) argue that BookTok has revitalized the social experience of reading by enabling users to share personal stories, rank books, and create diverse reading lists, thus turning literature into a collective, interactive activity.

In an age where social media has become a central force in shaping consumer preferences and behaviors, the impact of #BookTok serves as a compelling example of how online platforms are transforming purchasing patterns. Jerasa and Boffone (2021) note that BookTok's ability to inspire, engage, and drive book discovery among its users highlights the growing influence of digital communities in shaping modern consumer habits. Research by Stewart (2021) further emphasizes that BookTok's ability to promote a wide range of books—particularly backlist or lesser-known titles—has introduced a democratizing element to the publishing industry, allowing authors and books to gain visibility that they might not have achieved through traditional marketing channels.

The shift in purchasing behavior influenced by BookTok is also underlined by Nielsen (2019), who highlights the growing significance of social proof in consumer decisions. BookTok exemplifies the power of peer-driven recommendations, as studies show that consumers increasingly rely on reviews and recommendations from their social networks before making purchases (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). This influence has not only reinvigorated book sales but also established new connections between authors and readers, fostering a sense of community in a way that traditional book promotion could not. Reddan (2022) further argues that BookTok's

interactive format—characterized by short, engaging videos—has made book discovery more immediate and accessible, reshaping how readers engage with books in the digital age.

Need For Study

The primary aim of this research is to investigate comprehensively the impact of BookTok, a vibrant social media platform dedicated to discussing and endorsing books, on consumer buying behavior and reading engagement. While much attention has been paid to the influence of BookTok on book sales, this study seeks to explore the deeper dynamics of how peer-driven recommendations and the interactive nature of the platform shape reading habits and literary consumption. BookTok's success can be understood as a case study in how digital communities influence consumer behavior, not only in terms of sales but in terms of how readers approach books, genres, and authors (Reddan, 2022).

A key driver of BookTok's success is its grassroots nature. Unlike traditional advertising, which relies on paid endorsements, BookTok users create self-made content that generates a type of literary publicity that money cannot buy. According to Jerasa and Boffone (2021), this form of organic content resonates with users, particularly media-literate young people who are more likely to trust peer recommendations over commercial promotions. This trend aligns with research on consumer behavior, which suggests that social proof—the influence of others on individual decisions—significantly impacts purchasing decisions, particularly in the digital age (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). This peer-driven model fosters an environment where book endorsements feel authentic and unforced, increasing their persuasive power. As Stewart (2021) argues, BookTok's unfiltered and personal nature allows users to connect with content on a deeper level, making recommendations feel more genuine and trustworthy.

BookTok also plays a pivotal role in enhancing reading engagement by creating a sense of community among readers. It taps into strategic communication techniques, such as storytelling and audience segmentation, to build a loyal following. By utilizing video formats that combine narrative storytelling with visually engaging content, BookTok creators engage viewers emotionally, creating an immersive experience that resonates with them long after the video ends (Gill, 2021). This connection fosters a deeper engagement with literature, where users are not just passively consuming book recommendations but actively participating in discussions, creating content, and influencing each other's reading choices. As Martens, Balling, and Higgason (2022) note, these interactive spaces allow for a two-way exchange of ideas and feedback, fostering a sense of belonging within the community.

Furthermore, strategic communication techniques such as framing and segmentation enable BookTok to amplify its influence. Through targeted hashtags, personalized recommendations, and tailored content, BookTok creators and marketers can reach specific audiences, enhancing the relevance of book recommendations and discussions. As Zerfass et al. (2018) explain, digital platforms like TikTok allow for the rapid assessment of audience engagement, enabling communicators to adjust their strategies in real-time to ensure the message resonates effectively with the intended audience. This adaptability is key to BookTok's continued success in engaging readers and driving book discovery across a diverse demographic.

Delimitations

This research will not look at non-US reading communities. This research will not look at children's literature.

Study Purpose and Hypotheses

Although influencer marketing has been widely studied, the specific impact of TikTok—and particularly its subgenre, #BookTok—on book acquisition and consumption patterns remains underexplored. Early observations suggest that #BookTok is reshaping reading habits and driving book sales, with booksellers noting surges in young adult fiction popularity and users sharing renewed enthusiasm for reading (Dera et al., 2023).

Today's youth spends more time on social media than on traditional media, making it increasingly challenging to convey marketing messages to younger customers. The media consumption patterns of Generation Z (those born in the late 1990s and currently aged around 25 or younger) differ fundamentally from those of older generations. Haenlein et al. (2020) note that Generation Z is characterized by its preference for digital platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat, which offer interactive and engaging content over traditional media such as TV and print. According to Smith (2017), this generation has a more active relationship with media, often creating, sharing, and commenting on content rather than simply consuming it.

This shift has created an environment where marketing messages need to be more authentic, participatory, and aligned with the values of younger audiences. As a result, social media

platforms have become essential for engaging with Gen Z consumers, requiring marketers to adopt a more personalized, interactive approach.

TikTok, particularly through #BookTok, has revolutionized the book industry by reshaping how readers discover and engage with literature. Unlike traditional marketing methods, TikTok leverages short-form video content, rapid trend cycles, and high user interaction to create a dynamic platform for book promotion (Leaver et al., 2020). Through its viral nature, #BookTok enables books to gain traction swiftly, often propelled by peer recommendations rather than traditional publishing gatekeepers (Reddan, 2022). This democratization of book promotion challenges the industry's long standing reliance on curated marketing campaigns and empowers readers to influence trends on an unprecedented scale (Martens, Balling, & Higgason, 2022).

In addition to driving book sales, #BookTok fosters deeper engagement and community-driven book discovery. The platform invites users to share personal reflections, engage in lively discussions, and recommend books that resonate with their unique tastes (Jerasa & Boffone, 2021). This participatory model contrasts with the passive consumption encouraged by traditional media and exemplifies the concept of social proof, where peer validation shapes individual purchasing decisions (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). By creating a space where users actively shape literary discourse, TikTok transforms the reading experience into a collaborative and interactive process (Zerfass et al., 2018).

The platform's influence varies across demographics, with younger readers—particularly teens and young adults—embracing #BookTok as a source of excitement and discovery. Popular

genres like young adult fiction, fantasy, and romance thrive within this demographic, with #BookTok reigniting enthusiasm for reading among many young people. Conversely, adult readers tend to not use the platform and stick to older, more "traditional" ways to broaden their literary tastes, exploring genres such as memoirs, historical fiction, and self-help through face to face interactions. This intergenerational reach highlights #BookTok's ability to connect readers of all ages while shaping distinct experiences for different audiences.

By exploring these dynamics, this research will illuminate the evolving relationship between digital communities and the publishing industry. As Stewart (2021) notes, platforms like TikTok grant readers a significant role in amplifying voices and promoting books, disrupting traditional power structures in publishing. These shifts underscore the growing influence of digital spaces in driving literary trends and creating a more inclusive and participatory book culture. The proposed hypotheses aim to investigate the extent of #BookTok's impact on book sales, consumer engagement, and the broader cultural consumption of literature. Given the lack of research in this area, the proposed hypotheses for studying #BookTok's influence are:

H1: It is expected that young adult readers gravitate more towards the visual, peer-recommended content like TikTok than older adults who rely more on book club recommendations.

> A study on digital literacy suggests that while younger audiences prefer quick, multimedia-driven recommendations, older adults are more likely to engage with traditional methods of book discovery that emphasize deeper context, such as book clubs or literary reviews (Rowlands et al., 2008).

According to Gesmundo, M. A. G., et al. as brands navigate TikTok, they not only enhance their visibility but also cultivate authentic connections with audiences, particularly among younger demographics who increasingly favor platforms that prioritize reliability and creativity.

> Social media platforms, particularly TikTok, have become key spaces where Millennials and Gen Z discover new products and content. These platforms leverage creative, user-generated content, making them essential for brands targeting younger demographics

H2: It is expected that TikTok influences the reading habits and purchasing behaviors of its #BookTok community through strategic communication techniques, including persuasion, framing, and storytelling.

According to Publishers Association, 2022, Almost two-thirds (59%) of young people reported that BookTok or book influencers have helped them discover a passion for reading.

> BookTok's ability to make books go viral has transformed bookselling. Retailers like Barnes & Noble and independent bookstores have created dedicated BookTok sections to meet demand. These viral trends demonstrate how TikTok users directly influence mainstream book sales by amplifying specific genres and titles through storytelling and word-of-mouth recommendations (Dean Publishing, 2023)

According to Debra el al., 2023, BookTok has transformed how young audiences engage with literature, turning casual readers into avid consumers.

> BookTok's algorithm helps sort users into communities and serve them content that fits their preferences, leading to a significant rise in book sales. This has made it critical for authors to engage with social media, particularly TikTok, to promote their work and connect with readers. Grumbach (2024)

Methodology

The first phase of this research involves the systematic collection and detailed analysis of data sourced from the TikTok platform. This includes an extensive search and data scraping of posts associated with the #BookTok hashtag, along with other relevant hashtags linked to the top books of the year. Following this, titles will be selected for analysis based on their presence in widely recognized bestseller lists, notable literary awards, and general consensus within the literary community.

Content Analysis

The objective is to identify and categorize 10 young adult fiction titles and 10 fiction titles from *The New York Times* bestsellers list for December 15, 2024, Screenshots of the #BookTok community discussions for each of these titles will also be captured.

To provide a comprehensive overview of the TikTok posts related to the selected books, the ten most recent posts from each of the ten #BookTok communities will be extracted and reviewed, resulting in a total of 200 posts for analysis. This multidimensional approach ensures that the research is thorough and reflects the dynamic interactions within the #BookTok community.

Qualitative Research

A focus group will be conducted to explore the differences between younger and older readers in terms of their reading habits, preferences, and engagement with digital platforms like #BookTok. To better understand these dynamics, this research will test the effectiveness of strategic communication techniques—such as persuasion, framing, and storytelling—employed within

#BookTok content. By analyzing how these techniques resonate with different age groups, the study aims to uncover the mechanisms that make TikTok an especially powerful tool for shaping reading habits and preferences. Additionally, the study will explore the persuasiveness of static versus multi-image platforms, such as TikTok, and how these different content formats impact younger readers' engagement with books. This approach will shed light on how digital platforms not only cater to younger readers' preferences but also engage broader audiences in unique and impactful ways.

On the other hand, older readers tend to favor more traditional forms of book discovery, such as browsing physical bookstores or relying on long-established review sources (Chyi & Yang, 2021). While some older readers are increasingly engaging with digital platforms, they may approach them with skepticism, preferring in-depth reviews or detailed author interviews over the fast-paced and visually-driven content popular among younger audiences. The focus group will aim to understand these generational differences in reading preferences and habits, exploring how social influence and digital tools shape their engagement with books.

By comparing the experiences and attitudes of younger and older readers, the focus group will provide valuable insights into how different demographics use social media and traditional platforms to discover literature.

Summary

What impact has BookTok had on contemporary reading habits, particularly among younger audiences? To what extent do peer-driven recommendations on the platform influence book sales, and how significant is the connection between the volume of mentions a book receives on

BookTok and its performance in the literary market? This research aims to answer these questions and provide insights into the transformative role of BookTok in reshaping literary consumption patterns.

BookTok has emerged as a significant cultural phenomenon, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, reigniting interest in reading among younger audiences through user-generated content that emphasizes authenticity and relatability (Reddan, 2022; Stewart, 2021). With over 50 billion views of the #BookTok hashtag, the platform has revolutionized book discovery, fostering peer-driven recommendations that resonate deeply with its users (Obreja et al., 2024). The findings aim to highlight BookTok's pivotal role in reshaping literary trends and consumer preferences, emphasizing its potential to revitalize the book industry in an ever-evolving cultural landscape. Chapter 2 will provide a detailed literature review.

Terminology

#BookTok: A subculture dedicated to the world of books and reading.

Book Acquisition: Refers to the process of obtaining books, either through purchasing, selecting, or receiving them for personal, institutional, or commercial use.

Book Consumption: Refers to the act of reading, engaging with, or absorbing books in various formats, whether through physical copies, e-books, or audiobooks.

Consumer Buying Behavior: Involves the decisions individuals make when purchasing products or services, shaped by personal preferences, social influences, and psychological factors.

Digital Landscape: Refers to the online environment shaped by the widespread use of digital technologies, platforms, and content. It includes social media networks, websites, and apps where individuals interact, consume information, and create content.

Framing: How information is presented to shape how people think about it. By focusing on certain details and leaving out others, it influences how the audience perceives something.

Gen Z: Refers to individuals born roughly between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s.

Influencer Marketing: When brands collaborate with social media influencers to promote products, leveraging their credibility and large followings to influence consumer behavior.

Macro-Influencer: Influencers who have a large following online (high likes).

Micro-Influencer: Influencers who have a smaller following online presence (low likes).

Niche: A specialized segment of the market for a particular kind of product or service.

Reading Habits: Refers to the patterns and behaviors individuals exhibit when engaging with written content, including how often they read, what genres or formats they prefer, and where and when they read.

Social Media: Websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.

Social Media Influencer: The use of influential opinion leaders, celebrity or non-celebrity, with many followers on social platforms, to foster positive responses in their followers.

Social Media Marketing: The use of social media platforms and websites to promote a product or service.

TikTok: A widely used social media platform that enables users to create and share short-form videos on a variety of topics, from trends and challenges to personal interests and creative expressions.

Chapter 2

The Evolution of Reading Communities in the U.S.

Petrich (2015) highlights that book clubs can inspire commitment through mutual accountability, fostering socialization not only within book club discussions but also across broader conversations. This sense of community promotes trust in relationships. Supporting this, Dresser (2013) asserts that when a community addresses the social-emotional needs of readers, success can be achieved both individually and collectively. Prather (2001) further emphasizes the distinction, noting that "reading individually is a skill; reading within a community is an art."

As our culture increasingly values learning, Beach and Yussen (2011) suggest that it is essential to enhance the way we appreciate individual perspectives. By doing so, book club discussions can cultivate stronger community connections, deepening the shared experience of reading.

Before the rise of digital technologies, Martens, Balling, and Higgason (2022) explain that readers connected through shared experiences by engaging in literary activities like book clubs, reading groups, literary festivals, and book talks, often hosted by public libraries or bookstores. While these activities still thrive in person today, they have also adapted to digital and hybrid environments, allowing readers to engage in a sociotechnical landscape that incorporates various digital devices.

Book Clubs

Ruhl (2019) elaborates that

> book clubs—also referred to as reading groups, book discussion clubs, or literature circles—are small, peer-led groups where members agree to read the same text, whether it's a story, poem, article, or book. These groups adhere to a structured reading and meeting schedule, facilitating discussions as they progress through the material.

During the 20th and 21st centuries, Ruhl notes, book clubs emerged around various genres, including crime, mystery, and niche interests such as politics and religion. Participating in a specific book club often serves as a way to reaffirm one's identity within a community or demographic group. Knollman-Porter and Julian (2019) echo this sentiment, stating, "Book clubs can provide a supportive environment that facilitates both socialization and reading."

According to Petrich (2015), a vibrant learning community begins with conversations that value diverse perspectives on literature. It is essential for participants in a book club to find meaning in their reading and discussions, as this can serve as a source of inspiration. Petrich also notes that book clubs can consist of small groups of learners collaborating to create a supportive community. Such communities comprise self-driven individuals who contribute to each other's learning, encouraging deeper engagement and critical thinking. Overall, book clubs promote accountability, foster connections through discussions, and facilitate socialization across various topics, ultimately helping to build trust within relationships.

Impact of Digital Platforms

The rise of digital platforms has significantly transformed the landscape of reading communities. Reddan (2022) notes that the increasing popularity of social media accounts dedicated to books and reading has given rise to a new category of cultural intermediary: bookfluencers. Platforms like BookTube, Bookstagram, and BookTok offer diverse ways for readers to interact with books and connect with one another. BookTok, in particular, attracts readers seeking emotional engagement, while Bookstagram appeals to those who enjoy the sensory experience of reading through aesthetically pleasing displays of books and related items.

Birke (2021) highlights that a growing number of readers are taking to social media to celebrate what they refer to as "bookishness," identifying as individuals who consider reading—especially printed books—an integral part of their lives.

Driscoll and Sedo (2018) emphasize that historically, many readers have lacked a voice within formal literary institutions. Most have engaged in private reading, small group discussions, or attended mass reading events and festivals. However, with the advent of digital technology, new opportunities have emerged, allowing readers to participate in prominent forums where they can share their thoughts on books and connect with like-minded individuals.

YouTube

One prominent digital platform is BookTube, described by Perkins (2017) as the reading community on YouTube where literary vloggers connect over their shared passion for young

adult literature. Although this community began forming around 2009, its popularity surged significantly between 2011 and 2012.

YouTubers engage with BookTube by creating and uploading various community-defined video types related to their reading experiences, including book reviews, discussions about reader identity, responses to other videos, and topics inherent to BookTube culture (Eher, Boegel, & Manuel-Nekouei, 2018).

Birke (2021) notes, "Their success among their users is grounded in the fact that reading has been mired in different kinds of sociality: providing experiences to be shared… they provide new opportunities to engage with others around reading." Papacharissi (2015) adds that BookTubers strive to demonstrate their "authenticity" through engagement with their fan community, fostering ongoing dialogues that reinforce their identities as genuine book lovers through what is known as "affective" labor.

Goodreads

Another key platform in the evolution of reading communities is Goodreads. According to Thelwall and Kousha (2017),

Goodreads is an Amazon-owned book-based social website for members to share books, read, review books, rate books, and connect with other readers. Goodreads has tens of millions of book reviews, recommendations, and ratings that may help librarians and readers select relevant books.

Discovering like-minded readers on the site facilitates collaborative filtering, allowing users to receive implicit recommendations for new books based on the preferences of others with similar

tastes. This process can occur automatically through the Goodreads recommendation algorithm or manually by exploring lists on other members' profile pages.

Driscoll and Sedo (2018) explain that reviews on Goodreads create intricate social networks around reading by connecting readers, authors, characters, and individuals in the reviewers' lives. As a social media platform, Goodreads is designed to foster connections among readers, with reviews implicitly directed toward others in the community.

Instagram

Instagram, a mobile social networking application, enables users to share photos and videos. Initially launched as a photo-sharing service known for its retro style and unique filters, the platform has seen increased video traffic due to features like 'Stories' and 'Reels.' The 'Stories' feature, akin to Snapchat, allows users to share a slideshow of photos or videos that disappear after 24 hours.

Within this landscape, Bookstagram refers to the book community on Instagram, where the hashtag #bookstagram has been utilized in over 75 million posts. This hashtag typically accompanies content such as images of books (including flat lays, book collections, book stacks, color displays, cover reveals, and TBR piles). It is also applied to posts featuring reading-related objects and scenes, with popular examples being bookshelves, 'shelfies,' and people holding or reading books. This visual content is often paired with text designed to engage other readers through book reviews and discussion questions (Reddan, 2022).

Obreja, Manolica, and Jelea (2024) highlight that "#Bookstagram creates a safe environment in which bookstagrammers introduce readership to new books, types of literature they may not have tried before, lesser-known authors, and advantageous methods of buying books." The hashtag was first used in 2011 and quickly gained popularity on social media platforms, significantly broadening the target audience for those sharing posts.

TikTok

The evolution of reading communities continues with TikTok, which has emerged as a powerful platform for book discovery. Reddan (2022) notes that the #BookTok subculture focuses on all things literary, with creators producing short, dynamic videos to recommend, review, and discuss the books they've enjoyed. This enthusiastic and creative community has experienced significant growth, with #BookTok amassing over 50 billion views by 2022.

The growth of BookTok accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic as readers sought virtual spaces to connect. Influencers in the BookTok community, primarily young women, have played a crucial role in this trend by sharing personal book recommendations and reviews that resonate with their audiences. These videos often propel books to bestseller status, causing previously lesser-known or older titles to gain popularity through viral attention (Stewart, 2021).

Abidin (2020) further explains that one factor driving this trend is the TikTok algorithm, which links creator success to the performance of individual posts. Users' 'For You Page' displays a personalized feed of content based on the posts they have viewed, liked, and shared. The popularity of a creator does not heavily influence the recommendation algorithm, allowing content from any user to potentially go viral. This dynamic encourages creators to focus on

engaging with TikTok trends and viral practices rather than investing time in developing a consistent personal brand.

Jerasa and Boffone (2021) observe that "a community of readers is emerging in these digital spaces, where readers are connecting with other like-minded adolescents, and these out-of-school literacy practices influence in-school academics." They also emphasize that it is the alignment of BookTok components that draws adolescent readers in, nurturing a vibrant reading community.

Martens, Balling, and Higgason (2022) further assert that BookTok provides a non-judgmental space for young people to freely read and engage with the books they love—or love to hate.

According to Reddan (2022), "the BookTok effect has significantly impacted book sales, with many bookstores featuring #booktok displays in-store and lists of books trending on BookTok in their online stores." Additionally, Martens, Balling, and Higgason (2022) state that "BookTok connects print and digital formats, offering innovative possibilities for young people's connected learning and reading promotion in schools and libraries."

The evolution of reading communities in the U.S. reflects a significant shift in how readers connect over shared literary experiences. Traditional book clubs, which have long provided accountability and social interaction through structured reading and discussions, have expanded into the digital realm. Platforms such as Goodreads, BookTube, Instagram, and TikTok now play an essential role in fostering social connections among readers, especially with the rise of communities like #BookTok on TikTok. These digital spaces have redefined reading practices by

making it easier for readers to share recommendations and discover new titles, with some lesser-known books becoming bestsellers thanks to viral trends (Evans, 2024).

The transition to digital platforms became even more pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic, which restricted in-person meetings and led many readers to engage through virtual communities. These platforms now offer unique ways to connect, from influencer-led recommendations to interactive content such as unboxing videos (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011). Influential platforms like BookTube and BookTok create new dynamics in the publishing industry by driving sales and amplifying niche literary voices, offering readers a blend of entertainment and engagement (Bucher, 2012; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011).

Consumer Buying Behavior

Definition of Consumer Behavior

According to Madhavan and Chandrasekhar (2015), "Consumer behavior has been defined as 'those acts of individuals directly involved in obtaining, using, and disposing of economic goods and services, including the decision processes that precede and determine these acts'".

Factors Influencing Consumer Buying Behavior

Madhavan and Chandrasekhar (2015) highlight that purchasing behavior is shaped by various factors, including social elements such as culture, subculture, social class, reference groups, and family, along with technological, political, economic, and personal aspects. Personal influences include motivation, personality, self-image, perception, learning, beliefs, and attitudes.

Similarly, Qazzafi (2020) identifies four primary factors affecting consumer buying behavior:

1. Personal factors (age, lifestyle, personality)

2. Physiological factors (needs and preferences)

3. Cultural and social factors (values, social norms, peer influence)

4. Economic factors (income, financial stability)

Pantano and Gandini (2017) further emphasize how modern retail environments increasingly adopt interactive and contactless technologies that enhance consumer experiences by building trust and facilitating decision-making. These innovations shape consumer behavior, especially in dynamic shopping environments where in-store technologies help mitigate uncertainties during the buying process (Lazaroiu et al., 2020; Mou et al., 2018; Solomon, 2017; Tuten & Solomon, 2017).

The Consumer Buying Process

Kumar (2016) explains that consumer behavior involves determining when, where, and how often consumers make purchases and use products. The buying process typically consists of five stages:

1. Need Recognition: The consumer identifies a need or problem.

2. Information Search: They gather information on available products or services.

3. Evaluation of Alternatives: The consumer compares different options.

4. Purchase Decision: A final decision is made, and the product is purchased.

5. Post-Purchase Behavior: The consumer reflects on the purchase, affecting satisfaction and future behavior.

As Kumar (2016) notes, "The process begins once the consumer has established a willingness to buy," and marketers aim to influence each stage by providing relevant information to shape consumers' evaluation and decision-making.

Similarly, research on social commerce platforms highlights that consumer purchase behavior is influenced by trust, online reviews, and perceived risk, which play essential roles in shaping both purchase and repurchase decisions (Lazaroiu et al., 2020; Choi & Lee, 2017; Liu & Zhang, 2018; Goh et al., 2013).

Models of Consumer Buying Behavior

Several key models are instrumental in understanding consumer behavior:

-The Five-Step Consumer Decision-Making Process, as outlined by Kumar (2016), delineates the journey consumers undertake when making purchases. It begins with Need Recognition, where a consumer identifies a problem or desire. Next, during the Information Search stage, they gather information on potential solutions. This is followed by the Evaluation of Alternatives, where consumers compare different products or services based on various attributes. The Purchase Decision stage marks the actual buying moment, influenced by factors such as brand reputation and marketing communication. Finally, Post-Purchase Behavior involves reflecting on the purchase experience, which can affect future buying decisions and brand loyalty (Choi & Lee, 2017; Lazaroiu et al., 2020).

Strategic communication techniques, such as tailored messaging and storytelling, play a vital role at each stage of this process. For instance, personalized marketing can enhance the information

search, while effective storytelling can build emotional connections, influencing the evaluation and decision stages (Cornelissen, 2020; Lundqvist et al., 2013). Overall, understanding this decision-making framework allows marketers to effectively engage consumers and foster long-term loyalty through well-timed and relevant communication strategies.

- <u>Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs</u> is a psychological framework that categorizes human motivation into five levels, ranging from basic physiological needs to the higher need for self-actualization. According to Robinson (2017), this model suggests that individuals must satisfy lower-level needs before they can address higher-level psychological and self-fulfillment needs.

At the base of the hierarchy are physiological needs, such as food, water, and shelter, which must be met for survival. Once these needs are fulfilled, individuals seek to satisfy safety needs, including personal and financial security (Aaker, 1996). The next levels encompass social needs, which involve relationships and belonging, followed by esteem needs that pertain to self-esteem and recognition from others. Finally, self-actualization represents the pursuit of personal growth and fulfillment, where individuals strive to realize their full potential (Reeve, 2015).

In the context of consumer behavior, marketers can utilize this framework to tailor their strategies. For instance, products that address basic physiological needs, such as food and clothing, can be positioned to highlight their essential qualities. As consumers progress up the hierarchy, brands can emphasize how their offerings enhance safety, foster social connections, or contribute to self-esteem, ultimately leading to a narrative that appeals to self-actualization

(Robinson, 2017; Aaker, 1996). This approach enables marketers to connect with consumers at multiple levels, enhancing engagement and loyalty.

- The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), introduced by Ajzen in 1991, identifies three key factors that influence an individual's intention to engage in specific behaviors, such as purchasing decisions. These factors are attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control.

1. Attitudes reflect a person's evaluation of the behavior, where positive beliefs about a product increase the likelihood of purchase (Armitage & Conner, 2001).

2. Subjective norms relate to perceived social pressures from important individuals or groups, influencing whether a person feels compelled to follow through with a purchase (Xu-Priour et al., 2017).

3. Perceived behavioral control indicates the individual's perception of their ability to execute the behavior, encompassing factors like product accessibility and personal resources. Greater perceived control often correlates with stronger purchase intentions (Xu-Priour et al., 2017).

Understanding these components allows marketers to craft strategies that enhance favorable attitudes, leverage social influences, and reduce perceived barriers, thus increasing the likelihood of consumer purchases (Armitage & Conner, 2001).

Environmental and Emotional Influences on Consumer Behavior

While psychological and economic factors are critical, emotional and environmental influences also shape consumer decisions. Madhavan and Chandrasekhar (2015) emphasize that environmental factors, such as cultural, group, and social values, significantly impact behavior.

Pantano and Gandini (2017) argue that in today's retail settings, digital technologies, such as interactive displays and contactless systems, help build trust and guide consumers toward purchase decisions (Lazaroiu et al., 2020; Escobar-Rodríguez & Bonsón-Fernández, 2017).

Additionally, research on emotional influences points to the role of impulse buying behavior, especially in environments like social commerce or retail stores. Emotional states and sensory stimuli—such as personalized ads and retail displays—trigger unplanned purchases, highlighting the importance of marketers targeting these drivers through well-designed promotions (Lazaroiu et al., 2020; Escobar-Rodríguez & Bonsón-Fernández, 2017; Chinomona & Sandada, 2013; Matzler et al., 2011).

Continuing, Lazaroiu et al. (2020) show that trust and risk perception play crucial roles in shaping consumer intentions and behavior in online shopping environments. Consumers are more likely to make repeat purchases when they trust the platform, underscoring the importance of building credibility and providing clear product information in digital commerce settings (Khan, 2015; Liu & Zhang, 2018; Chen et al., 2010).

Emerging Trends in Consumer Behavior

As consumer behavior continues to evolve, several emerging trends are shaping how marketers approach their strategies:

1. The growing focus on sustainability in consumer behavior reflects a shift towards prioritizing environmentally friendly and ethically produced products. Research shows that consumers increasingly consider sustainability in their purchasing decisions, seeking brands that demonstrate social responsibility and ecological awareness (Nielsen, 2018; Aaker, 1996).

This trend highlights the importance for businesses to align their practices with sustainable values. Companies that effectively communicate their commitment to sustainability can enhance their reputation and foster customer loyalty. The influence of social media amplifies consumer advocacy for sustainable practices, reshaping market dynamics (Bucher, 2012; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011).

2. Personalization has emerged as a pivotal strategy in consumer marketing, enhancing engagement and influencing purchasing decisions. Tailored marketing that leverages consumer data to create individualized experiences has shown to resonate well with consumers, driving positive responses to marketing campaigns (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Choudhury et al., 2021). This level of customization fosters a deeper emotional connection between consumers and brands, encouraging loyalty and repeat purchases.

The importance of personalization extends beyond mere consumer preference; it significantly impacts business performance. Research indicates that brands implementing personalized

marketing strategies can effectively differentiate themselves in a saturated market, leading to improved conversion rates and customer satisfaction (Bennett & Rundle-Thiele, 2005; Pelsmacker et al., 2018). By understanding and catering to individual consumer needs, businesses not only enhance the shopping experience but also strengthen brand loyalty and engagement.

3. <u>Influence of Social Media</u>: The influence of social media on consumer opinions and behaviors is profound and multifaceted. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter provide dynamic environments for brand engagement, enabling direct communication between consumers and brands. This interaction fosters a sense of community and connection, which significantly impacts consumer perceptions (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Liu & Zhang, 2018). Brands can leverage these platforms to build relationships, share content, and engage in real-time discussions, making consumers feel more involved in the brand narrative.

Moreover, social media serves as a vital channel for consumer feedback and reviews. Users often rely on peer opinions and experiences shared online when making purchasing decisions, underscoring the importance of social proof in the decision-making process (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

The evolving landscape of consumer behavior illustrates a profound shift influenced by digital advancements and changing societal values. As consumers increasingly prioritize sustainability and ethical practices, businesses must adapt their strategies to align with these values. Research indicates that consumers are more inclined to support brands that demonstrate a commitment to

sustainability, significantly affecting purchasing decisions (Nielsen, 2018; Aaker, 1996).

Personalization has also emerged as a key driver of consumer engagement; tailored marketing

strategies that utilize consumer data not only foster positive responses but also enhance brand

loyalty (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Choudhury et al., 2021).

Additionally, the impact of social media on consumer behavior cannot be understated. These

platforms serve as vital spaces for brand engagement, where consumer feedback and peer

opinions shape purchasing choices (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Liu & Zhang, 2018). Businesses

are now compelled to actively participate in conversations that influence consumer perceptions,

making it essential to develop strategic communication techniques that resonate with audiences.

Navigating the complexities of modern consumer behavior requires a multifaceted approach. By

integrating insights from consumer behavior research with innovative communication strategies,

brands can enhance their connections with consumers, drive engagement, and effectively

influence purchasing decisions. This strategic alignment not only supports immediate sales

objectives but also fosters enduring brand loyalty in an increasingly competitive marketplace,

ensuring that businesses remain relevant and responsive to the dynamic needs of their consumers

(Cornelissen, 2020; Kumar, 2016).

Strategic Communication Techniques

Public Relations Strategic Communication Techniques

Public relations (PR) is essential for managing and cultivating relationships between

organizations and their audiences. PR strategies often emphasize crafting a positive image

through storytelling and engaging narratives that resonate with target audiences (Hutton, 2001; Coombs & Holladay, 2012). A foundational technique in PR is media relations, which involves establishing strong connections with journalists and media outlets to secure favorable coverage. This approach not only enhances credibility but also empowers organizations to shape their narratives in the public sphere (Smith, 2013).

Effective media relations rely on proactive engagement with the media—through press releases, interviews, and events—which can significantly influence public perception (Smith, 2017). Additionally, developing compelling narratives that resonate with journalists is crucial for broadening the reach of an organization's story (Wilcox et al., 2019). This aligns with Frith and Frith's (2010) findings that strategic media communication fosters trust and transparency.

Another critical PR technique is community engagement, which strengthens public perception and brand loyalty. Coombs and Holladay (2012) highlight the importance of community relations in building trust. Organizations that invest in community initiatives, such as sponsorships and outreach programs, demonstrate their commitment to social responsibility, thereby enhancing their reputation (Dawkins, 2017). This two-way communication fosters goodwill and allows organizations to cultivate lasting relationships with key stakeholders (Watson, 2014).

Advertising Strategic Communication Techniques

Advertising plays a crucial role in strategic communication by influencing consumer behavior and promoting brand awareness. Key techniques include targeted messaging, emotional appeals, and storytelling, which create compelling narratives that resonate with consumers (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Aaker, 1996). Targeted messaging ensures that advertisements reach the

appropriate audience, while emotional appeals leverage consumers' feelings to enhance engagement and recall (Schaefer, 2016). Storytelling has emerged as a powerful tool, allowing brands to connect with consumers on a deeper level, fostering loyalty and enhancing brand identity (Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Pulizzi, 2012).

Targeted messaging is fundamental in advertising, enabling brands to connect effectively with specific audience segments. Kotler and Keller (2016) emphasize the importance of data analytics in identifying consumer preferences and tailoring advertisements accordingly. By delivering personalized messages that align with individual interests, advertisers can enhance engagement and drive conversions (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). This technique is particularly crucial in today's digital landscape, where consumers are inundated with information and seek relevance in marketing communications (Choudhury et al., 2021).

Emotional appeals are essential for creating lasting impressions and influencing consumer decisions. Research indicates that advertisements evoking emotions—such as happiness, nostalgia, or empathy—can significantly enhance brand recall and loyalty (Aaker, 1996; Brunyé et al., 2019). By crafting narratives that resonate emotionally, brands can forge deeper connections with their audiences, ultimately driving purchasing behavior (Holt, 2002). Storytelling in advertising has emerged as a powerful technique, enabling brands to create engaging and relatable content. Lundqvist et al. (2013) note that storytelling allows brands to convey their values and connect with consumers on a personal level. Effective narratives not only enhance brand identity but also foster customer loyalty by creating memorable experiences (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). This approach underscores the importance of creativity and

authenticity in advertising communications, as storytelling can significantly differentiate a brand in a crowded marketplace (Fog et al., 2010).

The Role of Virality and Algorithms

Strategic communication is profoundly influenced by the concept of virality, which refers to the rapid spread of content through social networks. Berger and Milkman (2012) highlight that emotionally charged content is particularly effective in fostering virality, as messages that evoke humor, awe, or anger tend to be shared more widely. Their research indicates that emotional resonance is a critical factor in creating successful marketing campaigns, as brands strive to develop content that informs and engages consumers emotionally (Frith & Frith, 2010; Escalas & Bettman, 2005).

The role of social media algorithms further complicates this landscape. According to Bucher (2012), these algorithms dictate which content is prioritized and seen by users, making it essential for marketers to understand how engagement metrics influence visibility. Kaplan and Haenlein (2011) discuss that social media platforms often favor content that generates high user interaction, thus reinforcing the need for brands to craft messages that encourage likes, shares, and comments (Liu & Zhang, 2018). Additionally, paid advertising and influencer partnerships significantly amplify message reach, allowing brands to penetrate audiences that may not engage organically (Arora et al., 2019; Kietzmann et al., 2011).

The rise of micro-influencers has introduced a new dynamic to strategic communication. Abidin (2016) points out that these influencers, with their smaller but more engaged followings, can

create authentic connections with audiences, which enhances brand credibility. Jin et al. (2019) further argue that the perceived authenticity of micro-influencers leads to stronger brand loyalty and positive consumer attitudes, aligning with the findings of recent studies that emphasize the effectiveness of relatable content over traditional celebrity endorsements (Audrezet et al., 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Moreover, the emergence of short-form video platforms, particularly TikTok, has transformed the landscape of viral marketing. Chen et al. (2021) discuss how TikTok's fast-paced nature challenges traditional marketing strategies, compelling organizations to adapt their messaging to be concise, engaging, and visually appealing. This shift not only accelerates the viral potential of campaigns but also requires brands to remain agile and responsive to evolving consumer preferences (Leaver et al., 2020; Patel & Sarin, 2021).

Ultimately, the interplay between emotional engagement, social media algorithms, and influencer dynamics underscores the complex landscape of strategic communication in the digital age. Brands that successfully navigate these elements can create impactful campaigns that resonate with consumers and foster meaningful connections (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Liu et al., 2018).

Emotional and Environmental Influences in Communication

Impulse buying often results from emotional triggers, such as personalized ads or sensory-rich retail displays (Lazaroiu et al., 2020; Escobar-Rodríguez & Bonsón-Fernández, 2017). In crisis situations, communication strategies shift toward transparency and empathy to maintain trust

(Coombs, 2012). Crisis communication also involves scenario planning to address potential reputational risks (Fearn-Banks, 2016).

Trust-building is equally critical in online shopping environments, where transparency and credibility shape consumer perceptions (Liu & Zhang, 2018; Khan, 2015). A positive post-purchase experience, driven by trust, increases the likelihood of repeat purchases (Choi & Lee, 2017). Brands also utilize environmental messaging—such as sustainability campaigns—to align with consumer values and build deeper emotional connections (Ottman et al., 2016).

Personalization and AI in Communication

Personalization is becoming a cornerstone of strategic communication. By utilizing artificial intelligence (AI), organizations can deliver highly targeted messages, improving customer satisfaction and engagement (Chen et al., 2021). AI-powered recommendation systems, chatbots, and predictive analytics help brands tailor their communication to individual needs, fostering deeper connections with consumers (Ditlevsen & Johansen, 2019).

However, ethical concerns about data privacy and algorithmic transparency are rising, as consumers demand greater control over their personal data (Liu & Zhang, 2018). Communication strategies must strike a balance between personalization and privacy to maintain consumer trust (Ottman et al., 2016).

The evolving landscape of strategic communication is increasingly influenced by various factors, including emotional engagement, social media dynamics, and consumer behavior. As brands

recognize the importance of personalization and ethical considerations in their messaging, they adapt to emerging platforms that facilitate deeper connections with audiences (Liu & Zhang, 2018; Chen et al., 2021).

TikTok, in particular, stands out as a powerful influencer, with its unique format and emphasis on user-generated content (Leaver et al., 2020; Patel & Sarin, 2021). Its ability to foster genuine engagement and virality presents organizations with fresh opportunities to enhance brand visibility and connect meaningfully with consumers (Chen et al., 2021; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). As strategic communication continues to evolve, understanding the impact of platforms like TikTok will be crucial for brands navigating the complexities of modern marketing effectively (Liu et al., 2018; Jin et al., 2019).

TikTok as a Strategic Communication Channel and Influencer

In recent years, TikTok has emerged as a leading platform in the realm of social media, fundamentally changing the landscape of strategic communication. With its emphasis on short-form video content and user-generated creativity, TikTok allows brands and influencers to engage with audiences in innovative ways (Khan, 2020; Leaver et al., 2020). The platform's rapid growth, particularly among younger demographics, has prompted marketers to rethink traditional strategies and leverage the unique features that TikTok offers (Chen et al., 2021).

TikTok as a Channel for Strategic Communication

TikTok serves as a powerful channel for strategic communication, providing organizations with a platform to reach diverse audiences through engaging and entertaining content. The app's sophisticated algorithm prioritizes content based on user preferences and interactions, allowing

brands to connect with potential customers organically (Bucher, 2012; Chen et al., 2021). This capability is particularly valuable in an era where consumers seek authenticity and relatability in marketing communications (Liu & Zhang, 2018).

Furthermore, TikTok's content format, characterized by brevity and creativity, encourages brands to develop messages that are not only informative but also visually appealing, leading to increased viewer engagement (Gonzalez, 2021). The platform's emphasis on visual storytelling allows brands to convey complex ideas quickly, making it easier for audiences to digest and share information (Baker & Lattimer, 2020). In addition, TikTok's unique features, such as filters, effects, and music integration, enable brands to create immersive experiences that capture the audience's attention (Ameer & Makarov, 2021). This multimedia approach enhances emotional engagement and fosters stronger connections between brands and their audiences.

Innovative Content Creation

One of the defining features of TikTok is its focus on user-generated content, which empowers users to become creators. This democratization of content creation allows for a diverse range of voices and perspectives to be shared, contributing to a more vibrant and inclusive digital landscape (Harris, 2020). Brands can leverage this aspect by collaborating with users to create authentic content that resonates with target audiences (Mediapost, 2021). For example, the success of branded challenges demonstrates how organizations can tap into the platform's creativity while fostering community participation (Chen et al., 2021; Patel & Sarin, 2021). This collaborative approach not only enhances brand visibility but also builds a sense of community among users.

Additionally, TikTok encourages creativity through its trending sounds and challenges, which provide a framework for users to express themselves while promoting brand messages (Ameer & Makarov, 2021). Brands that embrace these trends can more effectively connect with audiences, enhancing their relatability and appeal.

TikTok as an "Influencer"

As an influencer, TikTok shapes consumer perceptions and behaviors through its diverse community of content creators. Micro-influencers and everyday users on TikTok often have more authentic connections with their audiences compared to traditional celebrity endorsements, as their content feels relatable and genuine (Abidin, 2016; Jin et al., 2019). This authenticity enhances brand loyalty, as consumers are more likely to trust recommendations from influencers who share their experiences and values (Audrezet et al., 2020).

Moreover, TikTok influencers often utilize humor and storytelling, making their promotions more engaging and memorable (Khan, 2020). The platform's format allows for spontaneous and casual interactions, further humanizing the brands they endorse. This sense of relatability contributes to a higher likelihood of consumer action, such as making a purchase or participating in a campaign (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Studies indicate that influencers with smaller, more engaged followings tend to generate higher conversion rates, highlighting the effectiveness of micro-influencing in modern marketing (He et al., 2020).

The Power of Trends and Hashtags

TikTok's culture is driven by trends, challenges, and hashtags that create a sense of belonging and community among users. Brands that align themselves with these trends can enhance their

visibility and relevance on the platform (Chen et al., 2021). Research indicates that campaigns incorporating popular hashtags or challenges can lead to significant increases in user engagement and brand awareness (Patel & Sarin, 2021).

By actively participating in trending conversations, brands can position themselves as relatable and in tune with their audiences (Leaver et al., 2020). For instance, brands that launch their challenges can encourage user participation and organic sharing, further amplifying their reach. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in campaigns like #GuacDance, launched by Chipotle, which not only went viral but also significantly boosted sales during the promotion (Sweeney, 2020).

Emotional Engagement and Persuasion

Emotional engagement is a critical component of TikTok's effectiveness as a communication channel and its persuasive power. Content that evokes strong emotions—such as joy, nostalgia, or empathy—tends to be more impactful, leading to higher levels of sharing and interaction (Berger & Milkman, 2012; Leaver et al., 2020). By leveraging emotional storytelling, brands can create content that resonates deeply with viewers, fostering a connection that drives purchasing behavior (Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Holt, 2002).

Furthermore, TikTok's interactive features, such as duets and stitches, encourage users to engage with content personally, enhancing the persuasive impact as they see their peers reacting to or supporting the brand (Khan, 2020). This interaction facilitates a communal experience, where users feel part of a larger narrative that involves both the brand and their peers, amplifying the emotional resonance of the content (Frith & Frith, 2010).

TikTok's Algorithm and Persuasion

According to Butcher (2012), the persuasive power of TikTok is amplified by its algorithm, which curates content based on user preferences and promotes videos that are more likely to resonate with individual viewers. This personalized approach not only boosts user engagement but also increases the chances of content going viral, making TikTok a powerful tool for influencing consumer behavior (Chen et al., 2021).

The algorithm's focus on engagement metrics encourages brands to produce content that is entertaining, authentic, and highly shareable. This dynamic not only drives user interaction but also strengthens brand loyalty (Liu & Zhang, 2018). According to Ameer and Makarov (2021), the platform's design empowers even smaller brands to gain visibility through creative and compelling content, helping to level the playing field in digital marketing.

TikTok's combination of algorithmic precision, emotionally resonant content, and innovative storytelling has redefined strategic communication. As brands adapt to this evolving space, they're not just expanding their reach—they're building meaningful relationships with audiences. According to Liu and Zhang (2018), younger consumers are especially drawn to platforms that emphasize creativity, authenticity, and relatability, making TikTok an ideal channel for capturing their attention.

This shift also invites reflection on broader generational media preferences. While younger users often favor short-form, visually-driven content on platforms like TikTok, older audiences may gravitate toward more traditional formats that offer depth and sustained engagement. According

to Rowlands et al. (2008) and Wong (2019), these generational differences highlight the importance of tailoring content strategies to suit diverse audience behaviors in a rapidly changing digital landscape.

Understanding Reading Preferences: Young Adult vs. Older Adult Readers

In the ever-evolving literary landscape, significant differences exist between the reading preferences of young adults and older adults. These distinctions reflect not only genre preferences but also engagement methods and the impact of social media and technology. Examining the habits, preferences, and behaviors of both demographic groups sheds light on how publishers, authors, and marketers can better meet their needs (Rowlands et al., 2008; Wong, 2019).

Young Adult Readers: Digital Natives and Social Influences

Young adult readers, typically between the ages of 18 and 34, are digital natives who embrace various formats, from eBooks to audiobooks. Social media plays a pivotal role in shaping their reading habits, with platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter fostering new book communities and trends (Miller, 2021; Dixon, 2020).

One prominent example is BookTok, a sub-community on TikTok where users recommend books, review them, or participate in viral challenges tied to specific titles (Chen et al., 2021). This has resulted in previously overlooked books becoming bestsellers, demonstrating the platform's influence in driving sales and engagement (Turner, 2020).

Young adults also gravitate toward fiction that offers emotional resonance and inclusivity, including genres such as fantasy, romance, and contemporary fiction (Nell, 2018). They seek stories that reflect their experiences, emphasizing themes of identity, self-discovery, and social justice (Lee, 2019). The interactive nature of social media enables these readers to participate actively in book culture—by commenting, creating memes, or engaging in fan communities—which reinforces their connection with certain books and authors (Murray, 2020).

Older Adult Readers: Traditional Formats and Reflective Reading

Older adult readers, typically over the age of 50, tend to favor traditional formats, with a strong preference for physical books (Fisher, 2016; Wong, 2019). Their reading habits reflect a lifelong engagement with literature, often centered around literary fiction, historical narratives, memoirs, and non-fiction that offers intellectual enrichment or practical insights (Murray, 2020). This group appreciates longer, reflective works that provide depth and context, aligning with their interest in personal growth and cultural history (Fisher, 2016).

While some older adults have adopted digital formats—such as e-readers or audiobooks—many maintain a nostalgic attachment to print books, viewing them as more authentic (Rowlands et al., 2008). Additionally, book clubs remain popular among older adults, offering a social outlet that revolves around shared reading experiences and discussions (Wong, 2019). Although this group is less likely to rely on social media to discover books, they still engage with digital platforms in moderate ways, such as accessing online reviews or subscribing to literary newsletters (Murray, 2020).

The Influence of Social Media on Reading Habits

Social media has become a powerful driver of reading trends, especially among young adults. Platforms like TikTok have democratized book recommendations, allowing users to bypass traditional gatekeepers such as publishers and critics (Chen et al., 2021). Viral trends, such as "reading challenges" or themed hashtags, create a sense of community and make reading feel more participatory and accessible (Dixon, 2020). For example, campaigns like #BookTokChallenge encourage users to read specific genres or titles, contributing to the cultural relevance of certain books (Miller, 2021).

However, older adults are less immersed in social media-driven trends, preferring more traditional ways to engage with literature. While platforms like Facebook provide spaces for book-related conversations and book club groups, they do not play the same dominant role as TikTok does for younger readers (Rowlands et al., 2008). Social media's fast-paced nature contrasts with the reflective, slower-paced engagement that older adults often prefer, highlighting a generational divide in how readers discover and interact with literature (Murray, 2020).

Emotional and Cognitive Engagement Across Age Groups

The differences between young and older adult readers extend beyond genres and formats to the emotional and cognitive benefits they seek from reading. Young adults often read for escapism, personal identity exploration, and emotional resonance, particularly through stories with themes of self-discovery and belonging (Lee, 2019; Dixon, 2020). They are drawn to narratives that resonate with their life experiences, using reading as a way to navigate complex emotions and societal expectations.

In contrast, older adults tend to read for cognitive engagement and lifelong learning, often selecting books that challenge their thinking or provide insights into historical and cultural contexts (Fisher, 2016). Reading serves as a means of intellectual stimulation, contributing to cognitive health, especially as older adults seek to remain mentally active (Murray, 2020). Moreover, older readers place greater value on books that offer depth and complexity, which align with their accumulated life experiences.

The reading habits of young adults and older adults reflect broader shifts in cultural, technological, and emotional engagement with literature. Young adults gravitate toward social media platforms like TikTok, where communities such as BookTok influence reading trends through viral challenges and peer recommendations, creating a participatory reading culture (Chen et al., 2021; Miller, 2021). Their reading preferences align with themes of self-exploration and emotional connection, underscoring a desire for relatable narratives that reflect contemporary experiences (Dixon, 2020; Lee, 2019).

In contrast, older adults maintain a preference for physical books and longer, reflective reading sessions, often seeking intellectual enrichment and personal growth through their literary choices (Fisher, 2016; Rowlands et al., 2008). While they are less engaged with social media trends, older adults participate in more traditional book communities, such as book clubs, which provide opportunities for discussion and deeper connections to literature (Murray, 2020; Wong, 2019).

The interplay between social media-driven reading communities and more conventional literary practices reveals the evolving nature of reading across generations. By recognizing these

generational differences, publishers, authors, and marketers can develop strategies that appeal to both fast-paced digital readers and reflective traditionalists, ensuring that literature remains accessible and meaningful for all audiences (Turner, 2020; Wong, 2019).

This researcher will investigate how BookTokers are influenced by other TikTok users in the community's recommendations. The research will also discover what strategic communication techniques positively affect readership habits including purchases.

Chapter 3

Study Design and Methodologies

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative research techniques to explore the impact of #BookTok on paperback book sales. The research incorporates a content analysis of 200 #BookTok posts associated with bestselling books in the U.S. and two focus groups of four participants who either actively engage with #BookTok content or do not at all.

Content Analysis

To address Hypotheses 1 (H1) and 2 (H2), this study will conduct a content analysis of the top 10 best-selling young adult fiction and the top 10 best-selling fiction titles from the New York Times bestseller list for 2024. The selected sample will be based on rankings as of December 15, 2024, to capture the most current literary trends.

Sample Selection Process

The books analyzed will be identified using the New York Times bestseller rankings. Key variables examined will include:

- Book Sales Data: Collected as of December 15, 2024, to assess commercial performance.

- #BookTok Community Engagement: Measured through post frequency, interactions, and engagement metrics.

Data Collection Procedures

A systematic content analysis of #BookTok engagement. The researcher will capture the top 10 TikTok posts for each book, resulting in a total of 200. This approach integrates quantitative sales data with qualitative content analysis to assess #BookTok's influence on book sales and reading trends.

Focus Group

For Hypothesis 1 (H1), a focus group will be used to gather reader perspectives on best-selling books and their engagement with #BookTok content.

Sample Selection

The focus groups will consist of four participants selected through purposive sampling to ensure diverse demographics and reading preferences. This method ensures a comprehensive understanding of how different reader segments interact with #BookTok.

Variables of Interest

Key variables explored include:

- Emotional Responses: How participants react emotionally to books featured on #BookTok.

- Factors Influencing Book Choices: What drives participants' reading decisions.

- Engagement with #BookTok: Frequency of interactions with book-related content, preferred book formats, and exposure to new genres.

Study Procedures

Moderated discussions will allow participants to share their experiences regarding #BookTok and its impact on their reading choices. The discussion topics will include:

- Interaction with #BookTok Content: Frequency and nature of engagement with book-related TikTok posts.

- Influence on Book Purchases: How TikTok content has impacted book-buying decisions.

- Impact of Visual Presentation: The role of visually engaging posts in driving interest.

- Exposure to New Genres: Whether #BookTok has introduced participants to new genres or authors.

For participants unfamiliar with #BookTok, selected posts will be shown to gauge their perceptions and the persuasiveness of the content. The focus group will also examine the potential influence of community discussions on decision-making.

Research Significance

This study leverages both quantitative content analysis and qualitative focus group discussions to assess #BookTok's influence on reading habits, book sales, and consumer behavior. By integrating objective data (sales figures and engagement metrics) with subjective insights (participant experiences and emotional responses), this research provides a comprehensive understanding of the evolving relationship between social media and book consumption.

Chapter Four

Results

This chapter presents findings from a mixed-methods study. Through content analysis, the researcher examined how individuals use BookTok and how it influences their book-buying habits.

General Findings: Content Analysis

o apply a quantitative approach, the researcher conducted a content analysis of TikTok posts related to the top 10 Young Adult (YA) and adult books featured on the New York Times Bestsellers list for the week of December 15, 2024. This analysis explored how BookTok users engaged with these titles by examining popular hashtags, video formats, and user interactions such as likes, comments, and shares. In particular, the study focused on identifying the presence and use of three strategic communication techniques: persuasion, framing and storytelling. The researcher analyzed how users employed personal narratives, emotional appeals, and aesthetic choices to construct compelling book-related content.

 This approach offered insight into how BookTok functions not only as a platform for reader engagement but also as a dynamic space for informal literary marketing and digital word-of-mouth promotion.

Table 1 features the chosen titles for comparison of YA & Adult titles for the TikTok analysis.

Table 1: Top Books of the Week December 15, 2024

	YA Titles	Adult Titles
	Nothing Like the Movies	The Women
	If He Had Been With Me	James
	A Study In Drowning	The House Of Cross
	Divine Rivals	Counting Miracles
Book	The Glass Girl	Iron Flame
Titles	Murtagh	The Mirror
	The Grandest Game	Wicked
	Heir	Verity
	Where The Library Hides	A Court Of Thorns And Roses
	Don't Let The Forest In	The Housemaid

YA fiction often emphasizes coming-of-age themes, emotional growth, and fast-paced storytelling, while adult fiction explores more complex characters, darker themes, and intricate world-building. Fantasy and romance appear in both categories but differ in depth—YA focuses on adventure and self-discovery, whereas adult fiction leans into political intrigue and moral ambiguity. Thrillers also diverge, with YA favoring action-driven plots and adult novels incorporating psychological suspense.

Table 2 presents metrics from selected Young Adult BookTok posts.

Table 2: Young Adult Book Statistics

Book Titles	Number of Likes	Number of Comments	Number of Saves	Number of Shares
Nothing Like The Movies	258.4k	1869	27.7k	9795
If He Had Been With Me	262.7k	3325	67.4k	15382
A Study In Drowning	16872	734	11975	1277
Divine Rivals	88056	1525	16774	3059
The Glass Girl	27331	864	3896	848
Murtagh	19696	791	6516	1045
The Grandest Game	36.8k	560	6113	1191
Heir	7771	268	995	159
Where The Library Hides	2485	115	541	139
Don't Let The Forest In	1870	130	426	94

BookTok shows a clear impact on book engagement, with *If He Had Been With Me* and *Nothing Like The Movies* standing out for their high likes, comments, saves, and shares. Romance and fantasy genres seem to resonate most, with *If He Had Been With Me* having a strong save-to-like ratio, suggesting lasting reader interest. *Divine Rivals* and *A Study in Drowning* also show solid engagement, though some books like *Where The Library Hides* and *Don't Let The Forest In* have lower numbers, highlighting the need for greater exposure. Overall, BookTok boosts book visibility and sparks discussions.

Table 3 presents the metrics for the selected Adult book BookTok posts.

Table 3: Adult Book Statistics

Book Titles	Number of Likes	Number of Comments	Number of Saves	Number of Shares
The Women	6795	542	791	546
James	7636	474	1184	347
The House Of Cross	1333	202	236	48
Counting Miracles	706	148	78	57
Iron Flame	583.2k	6662	76.2k	56.7k
The Mirror	162	33	22	1
Wicked	260.3k	3423	27649	19647
Verity	77968	1939	10473	6902
A Court Of Thorns And Roses	1271423	11415	143042	312k
The Housemaid	273.5k	4486	43721	22624

BookTok plays a major role in book engagement also with *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, *Iron Flame*, and *The Housemaid* generating the highest interaction across likes, comments, saves, and shares. Fantasy and thriller genres dominate, benefiting from strong fan communities and viral appeal. While likes indicate popularity, shares and saves better reflect a book's influence and spread. In contrast, lower-engagement books like *The Mirror* and *Counting Miracles* may require more promotion to gain traction. Overall, BookTok not only drives discussions but also shapes bestseller trends and reader interest.

Table 4 shows the total number of hashtags used among all of the BookTok posts.

Table 4: Number of Hashtags Used Per Category
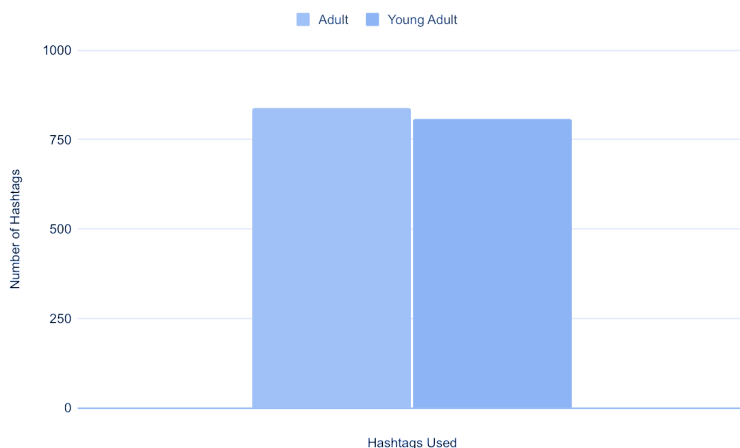
The data shows a relatively even distribution of TikTok hashtags between adult (838) and young adult (809) books, suggesting strong engagement across both categories. While adult books have a slightly higher hashtag count, the small difference indicates that both genres generate significant discussion and visibility on BookTok.

H1 Findings: Content Analysis

H1: It is expected that young adult readers gravitate more towards the visual, peer-recommended content like TikTok than older adults who rely more on book club recommendations.

Figures 1-10 display the percentage of positive and negative user reviews among the young adult BookTok posts.

Figures 1-10: Young Adult User Reviews

Figure 1

Nothing Like The Movies

● Present
● Absent

Figure 2

If He Had Been With Me
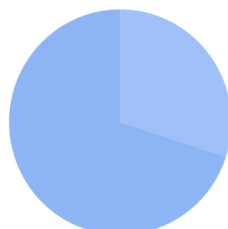
● Present
● Absent

Figure 3

A Study In Drowning
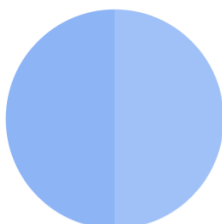
● Present
● Absent

Figure 4

Divine Rivals
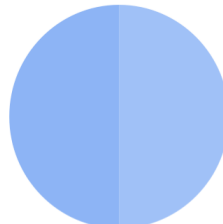
● Present
● Absent

Figure 5

The Glass Girl
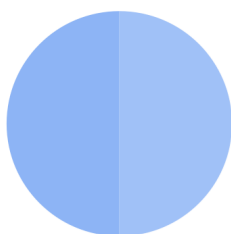
● Present
● Absent

Figure 6

Murtagh

● Present
● Absent

Figure 7

The Grandest Game
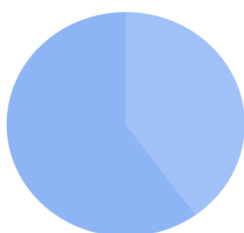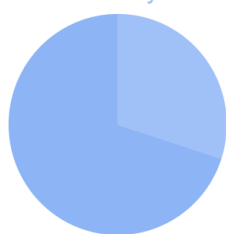
● Present
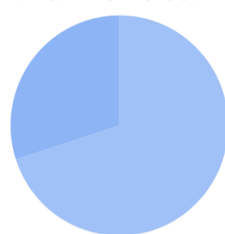● Absent

Figure 8

Heir
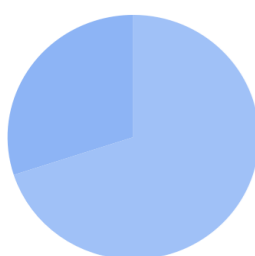
● Present
● Absent

Figure 9

Where The Library Hides

Present
Absent

Figure 10

Don't Let The Forest In

Present
Absent

User reviews serve as a key measure of TikTok engagement. For example, *Nothing Like The Movies*, *A Study In Drowning*, *Divine Rivals*, *The Glass Girl*, and *Murtagh* each show a balanced 50/50 split, indicating moderate interaction. In contrast, *If He Had Been With Me* and *Where The Library Hides* have a 30% present to 70% absent review ratio, suggesting lower engagement. Meanwhile, *Heir* and *Don't Let The Forest In* lead with 70% present to 30% absent, reflecting higher audience involvement. Overall, there are more absent than present reviews.

Figures 11-20 display the percentage of positive and negative user reviews among the adult BookTok posts.
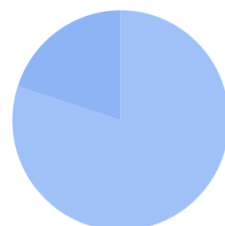
Figures 11-20: Adult User Reviews

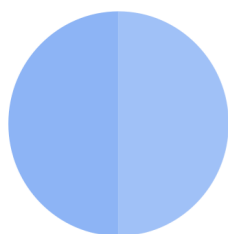**Figure 11**

The Women
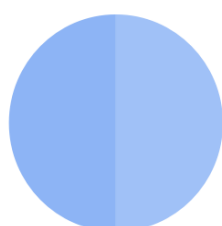
Present
Absent

Figure 12

James

Present
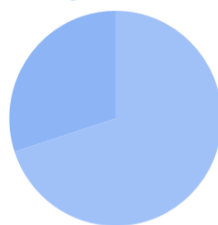Absent

Figure 13

The House Of Cross

● Present
● Absent
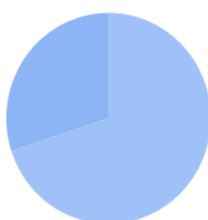
Figure 14

Counting Miracles

● Present
● Absent

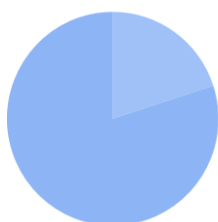**Figure 15**

Iron Flame

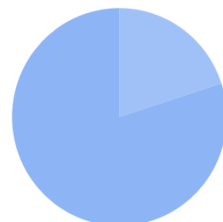**Figure 16**

The Mirror

● Present
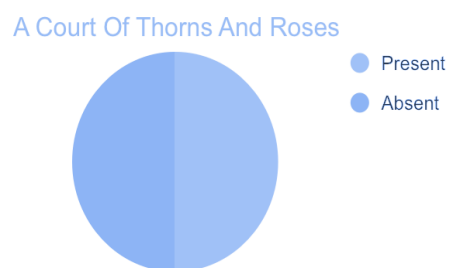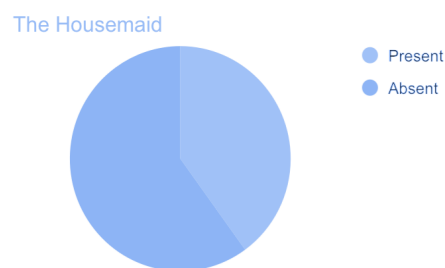● Absent

Figure 17

Wicked

● Present
● Absent

Figure 18

Verity

● Present
● Absent

Figure 19   **Figure 20**

A Court Of Thorns And Roses

● Present
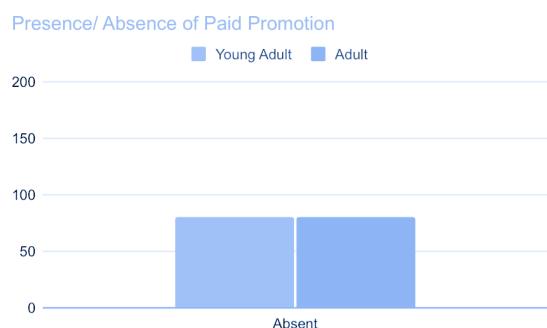
● Absent

The Housemaid

● Present

● Absent

The user review data shows varied engagement across titles. *James* stands out with 80% present reviews versus 20% absent, and both *Counting Miracles* and *The Mirror* maintain strong ratios at 70% to 30%. In contrast, *Iron Flame* records no present reviews against 100% absent, indicating minimal active feedback. Meanwhile, *The Women*, *The House of Cross*, and *A Court Of Thorns And Roses* have balanced interactions at and even 50% split, while *Wicked*, *Verity*, and *The Housemaid* lean toward lower engagement. Compared to the YA titles, there are overall more absent reviews.

Figure 21 displays the overall number of negative reviews among both young adult and adult BookTok posts.

Figure 21: Overall Negative Reviews

Negative Reviews
● Young Adult
● Adult
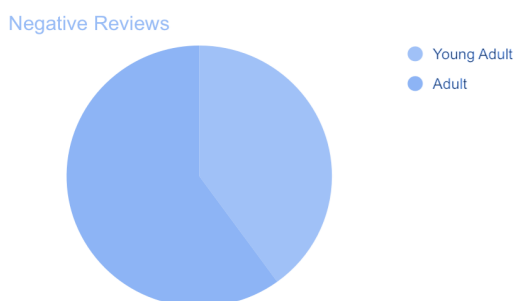
The data mirrors the YA data, with negative review percentages showing a slight difference between young adult and adult books. Young adult books have 40% negative reviews, while adult books have 60%, indicating a potentially higher level of dissatisfaction or criticism in the adult category. This suggests that user feedback on TikTok can differ across genres, with adult books receiving more negative reactions compared to young adult titles.

Figure 22 indicates the number of paid promotions present in BookTok posts for both YA and adult.

Figure 22: Paid Promotions

Presence/ Absence of Paid Promotion
■ Young Adult ■ Adult

This figure compares the presence and absence of paid promotion for young adult (blue) and adult (red) books. In both categories, the "absent" bar is significantly higher, indicating that most

TikTok videos (80%) do not feature paid promotion. The "present" count is evenly split between young adult and adult books, showing no significant difference between the two. Overall, the data suggests that while paid promotions do occur, they remain relatively rare for both age categories on TikTok.

H1 Findings: Focus Panel

Influence of TikTok on Younger vs. Older Readers

The first hypothesis (H1) proposed that younger readers are more influenced by visual, peer-recommended content on TikTok, while older adults tend to rely more on book club recommendations. The focus panel findings strongly support this hypothesis, showing clear generational differences in how readers interact with TikTok.

Younger Readers' Response to TikTok

Younger participants (primarily in their 20s) overwhelmingly stated that TikTok is their primary source of book discovery. They were particularly drawn to the visual nature of TikTok, noting that the emotional energy and engaging storytelling in BookTok videos strongly influenced their decisions to buy books. One participant shared, *"When I see a TikTok video with someone really excited about a book, I immediately want to read it. It feels like a personal recommendation, even though I don't know them."* The peer-recommended aspect of TikTok and its ability to capture emotions played a significant role in shaping their book-buying habits.

This finding suggests that younger readers are more likely to rely on TikTok for book recommendations, aligning with the hypothesis that younger readers are more influenced by visual, peer-driven content than older adults.

Older Readers' Preference for Book Clubs and Reviews

In contrast, older participants (30-40s) expressed a more cautious approach toward TikTok.

While they acknowledged that TikTok is a useful tool for discovering new books, they were less

likely to rely on the platform for making purchasing decisions. One older participant explained,

"I might find books on TikTok, but I usually check out the reviews on Goodreads or ask for

recommendations in my book club before I buy anything." This demonstrates that older readers

prefer the depth and thoughtful discussion provided by book clubs or detailed reviews rather than

the quick, visually-driven content on TikTok. This finding further supports the hypothesis, as

older readers tend to prioritize book club discussions and reviews over peer-recommended,

visual content.

H1 is supported by this research

H2 Findings: Content Analysis

H2: It is expected that TikTok influences the reading habits and purchasing behaviors of its

#BookTok community through strategic communication techniques, including persuasion,

framing, and storytelling.

Figures 23-32 display the number of times the selected strategic communication techniques

(persuasion, framing, storytelling, and none) are present in the chosen YA Booktoks.
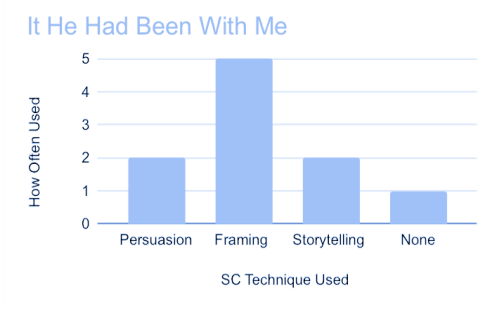
Figure 23-32: SC Techniques Used (YA)

Figure 23
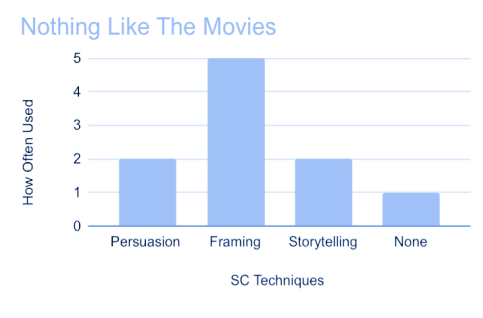
Nothing Like The Movies

Framing was the most used technique

Figure 24

It He Had Been With Me

Framing was the most used technique

Figure 25

A Study In Drowning

Framing was the most used technique

Figure 26

Divine Rivals
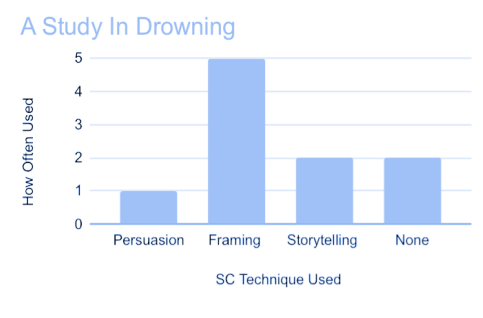
Framing was the most used technique

Figure 27

The Glass Girl
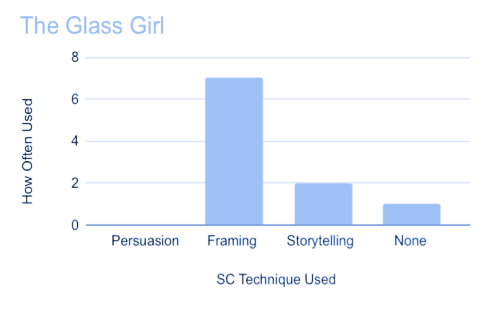
Framing was the most used technique

Figure 28

Murtagh

Framing was the most used technique

Figure 29

Figure 30

Framing was the most used technique
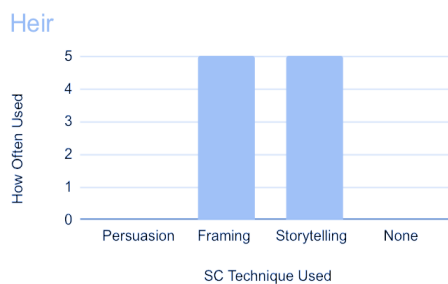
Framing and Storytelling split evenly

Figure 31
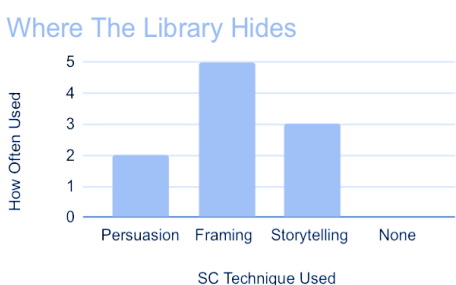
Figure 32

All three techniques were present

Framing was the most used technique
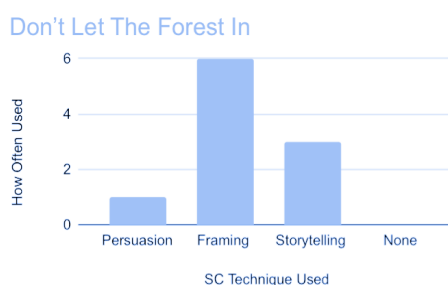
Overall, the data indicates that nearly all titles consistently use at least one rhetorical technique in their TikTok posts. Framing emerges as the most prevalent approach, appearing in 83% of the titles, followed by storytelling. Persuasion is employed the least, suggesting it is a more selective strategy. Notably, 8% of the posts fall into the "none" category, indicating that while the vast majority incorporate rhetorical techniques, a small portion do not. This highlights a strong but not absolute trend of deliberate engagement through these methods.

Figures 33-42 display the number of times the selected strategic communication techniques (persuasion, framing, storytelling, and none) are present in the chosen Adult Booktoks.

Figure 33-42: SC Technique Used (Adult)

Figure 33
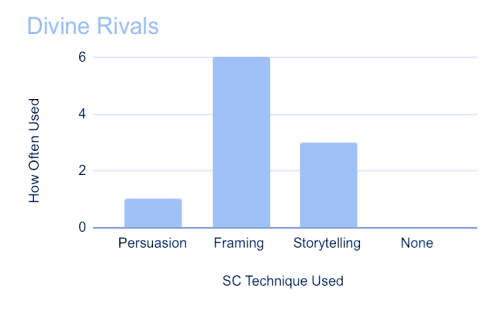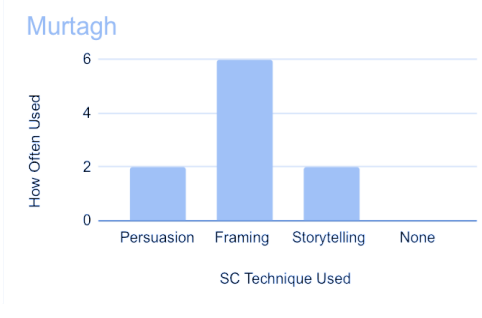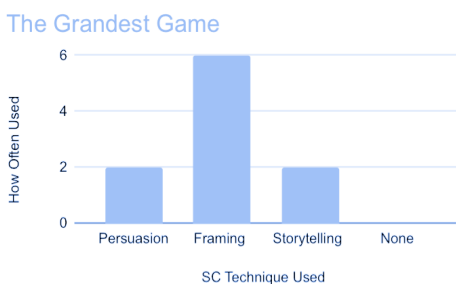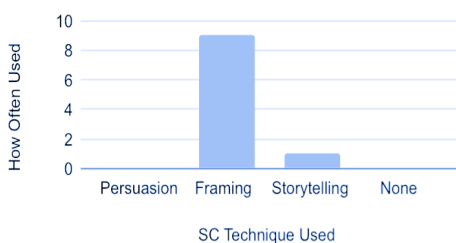

Framing was the most used technique

Figure 34
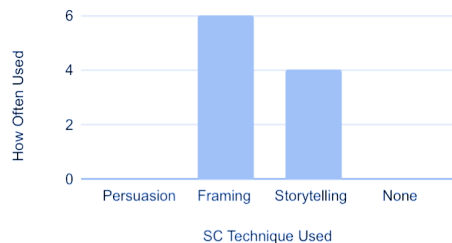
Framing and Storytelling were almost evenly split

Figure 35
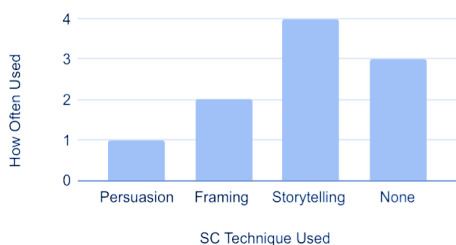
All techniques were present

Figure 36
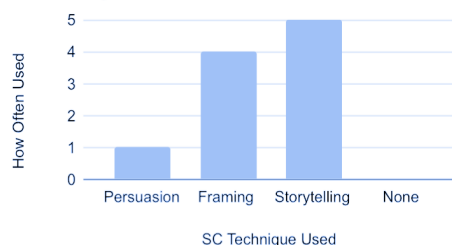
Framing and Storytelling were almost evenly split

Figure 37
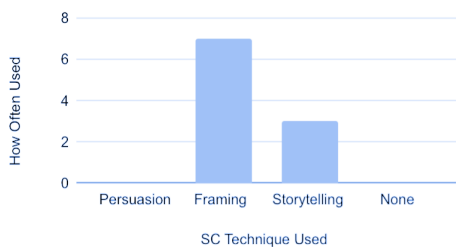

Framing and Storytelling were both present

Figure 38

Framing was the most used technique

Figure 39

Figure 40

Framing was the most used technique

Framing and Storytelling were the most used

Figure 41
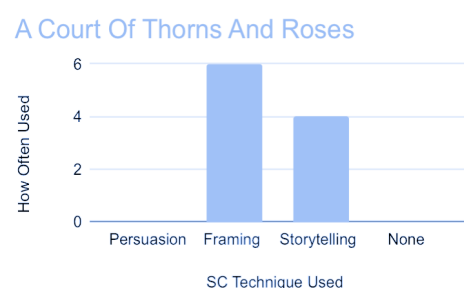
Figure 42

Framing and Storytelling almost evenly split Framing was the most used technique
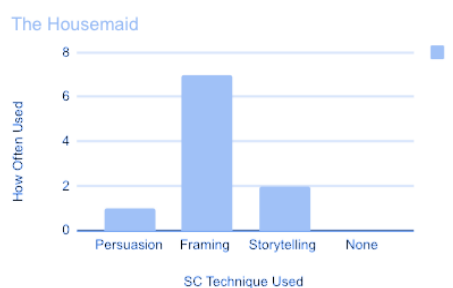
Similarly to the YA data, framing (emotional) is the most common technique used across titles, with The Women showing the highest instances. Storytelling is also prevalent, particularly in *Counting Miracles* and *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, where it appears frequently. Persuasion remains minimal, while a few titles, such as *The House of Cross* and *The Mirror*, include posts with no clear strategy. Overall, framing dominates, with storytelling providing additional narrative depth.

78

Figure 43 displays the most and least used SC techniques among all YA BookTok posts.

Figure 43: SC Technique Statistics for YA
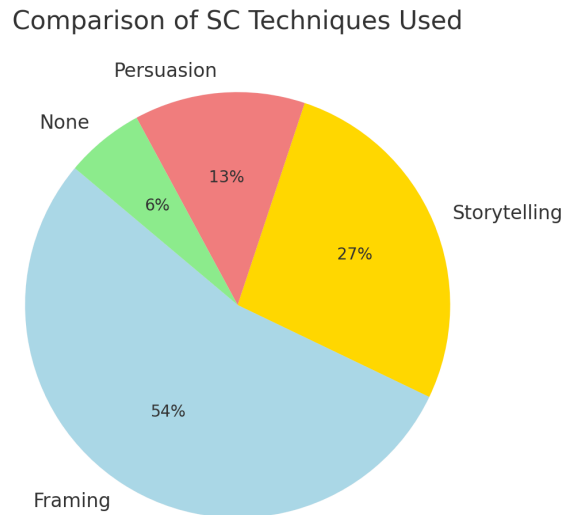
Figure 43 illustrates the distribution of different SC techniques used, including Framing, Persuasion, Storytelling, and None. The most frequently used technique is *Framing* (54%), which occupies the largest portion of the chart, indicating its dominant role in the dataset. *Storytelling* (27%) follows as the second most common technique, while *Persuasion* appears less frequently (13%). The *None* category represents instances where no SC technique was applied and is the least represented. This visualization helps highlight the preference for Framing and Storytelling over other methods in the given data.

Figure 44 displays the most and least used SC techniques among all Adult BookTok posts

Figure 44: Adult BookTok SC Technique Usage Statistics

Comparison of SC Techniques Used
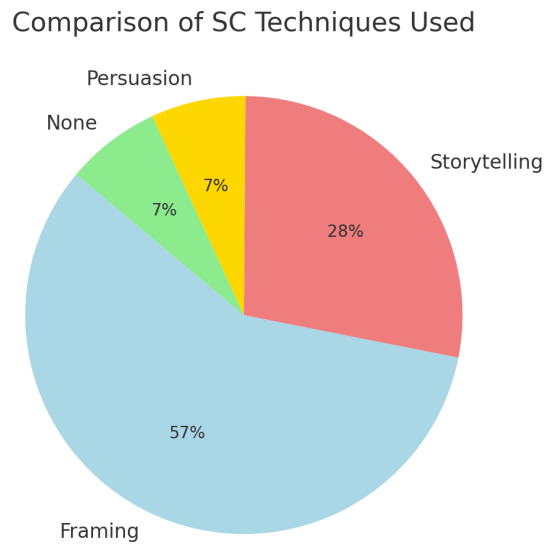
Figure 44 illustrates the distribution of different SC techniques used, including Framing, Storytelling, Persuasion, and None. *Framing* is the most frequently used technique, making up the largest portion of the chart (58%), indicating its dominant presence in the dataset. *Storytelling* follows as the second most common technique, showing a significant share (28%). *Persuasion* appears less frequently (7%), as well as the *None* category (7%), representing cases where no technique was applied. This visualization highlights a strong preference for Framing and Storytelling in the given data.

The two data sets reveal similar trends in the use of strategic communication techniques, with *Framing* being the most dominant approach in both. In YA, framing accounts for 54% of posts, whereas in Adult, it is slightly higher at 57-58%. This suggests that emotional framing is a consistently preferred technique across different contexts. *Storytelling* also plays a significant role in both, though its presence varies, with 27% in the first data set and 28% in the second. This minor variation indicates that narrative-driven posts remain a strong secondary strategy.

However, *Persuasion* and *None* show more notable differences. In the YA posts, persuasion is used in 13% of posts, while in the Adult posts, it drops to 7%, suggesting that persuasion is less commonly employed in the second set. Similarly, the proportion of posts without a clear strategy decreases from 6% in the YA data set to 7% in the Adult. These shifts indicate that while framing and storytelling remain dominant, the use of persuasion varies, potentially reflecting differences in content focus or audience engagement strategies.

H2 Findings: Focus Panel

TikTok's Influence on Reading Habits and Purchasing Behavior Through Strategic Communication

The second hypothesis (H2) proposed that TikTok influences reading habits and purchasing behaviors through strategic communication techniques, such as persuasion, framing, and storytelling. The focus panel findings highlight that TikTok does indeed shape book-buying decisions through these strategies, particularly among younger readers.

Younger Readers and Strategic Communication Techniques

Younger participants were particularly receptive to TikTok's strategic communication techniques. They noted that TikTok videos often use emotional framing, where the book is presented in a way that resonates with their own experiences or desires.

One participant explained, *"When a TikTok creator shares a personal story about how a book impacted them, it makes me feel like I could have that same experience, and that really encourages me to buy the book."* The emotional framing, combined with the personal stories shared in the videos, created a sense of connection that motivated younger readers to purchase the books. This indicates that TikTok uses emotional framing and storytelling as primary techniques to persuade younger readers, directly influencing their purchasing behaviors. This supports the hypothesis that TikTok's strategic communication techniques, particularly framing and storytelling, drive purchasing decisions.

Older Readers' Interaction with Communication Techniques

Older participants, while acknowledging TikTok's effectiveness in generating interest, were less swayed by persuasion or framing techniques. They indicated that they are more critical of the emotional appeals often seen in BookTok videos. However, some older participants admitted that the storytelling aspect of TikTok did capture their attention.

One participant shared, *"The way people describe a book's plot or characters in their TikToks makes me curious, and I might look it up on my own or share it with my book club."* This suggests that older readers engage with TikTok videos primarily as an introduction to books, relying on their own research or group discussions to determine if they will make a purchase.

This shows that while older readers are less influenced by framing or persuasion, they still respond to the storytelling aspect of TikTok, which piques their curiosity.

The data supports the hypothesis that TikTok's communication techniques influence readers' engagement, though the impact is more pronounced among younger audiences.

Generational Differences in Engagement with TikTok's Strategic Communication Techniques

The focus panel revealed clear generational differences in how TikTok's strategic communication techniques influence purchasing decisions. Younger readers were more influenced by emotional framing and storytelling, often purchasing books directly after encountering engaging TikTok content. In contrast, older readers were less influenced by the emotional framing and persuasive techniques and showed a preference for more in-depth reviews or discussions before making a purchase. These generational differences reinforce the second hypothesis (H2), suggesting that TikTok's strategic communication techniques are particularly effective in shaping the reading and purchasing behaviors of younger readers, while older readers rely on more traditional forms of engagement.

H2 is supported by this research.

Summary

In this chapter, the results of a comprehensive study investigating how BookTok influences book-buying habits were presented. A combination of content analysis and focus panel findings shed light on how TikTok shapes reading preferences, particularly in the Young Adult (YA) and adult book categories. Content analysis revealed a significant engagement of both YA and adult

books on BookTok, with genres such as romance, fantasy, and thrillers dominating the platform. It also highlighted the influence of TikTok on book visibility, engagement metrics like likes, comments, and shares, as well as the usage of strategic communication techniques such as framing and storytelling. The focus panel further emphasized the generational differences in how TikTok's visual and emotional content influences younger versus older readers, validating the hypothesis that younger readers are more susceptible to peer-driven, visual content, while older readers prefer in-depth reviews. Ultimately, the findings suggest that TikTok is not just a platform for discovering books but also a key player in influencing purchasing behaviors, particularly among younger audiences.

Chapter 5 will analyze the implications of these findings in relation to broader marketing strategies and the future of book promotion in the digital age. This chapter will also address the limitations of the study and propose avenues for future research on the evolving relationship between social media platforms like TikTok and consumer behavior in the book industry.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

This study examined the role of TikTok's #BookTok community in shaping book engagement, purchasing behaviors, and reading habits. Through a combination of content analysis and focus panel discussions, the findings reveal that BookTok serves as a powerful platform for book discovery, particularly among younger readers. Engagement metrics, including likes, comments, shares, and saves, demonstrate that books with high visibility on BookTok often experience increased reader interest. Additionally, the use of strategic communication techniques, such as framing and storytelling, plays a significant role in influencing audience behavior.

General Findings

Content Analysis

The content analysis of BookTok engagement revealed clear trends in book popularity, reader interactions, and genre preferences. Books with high engagement—measured through likes, comments, shares, and saves—demonstrated the strong influence of TikTok on reader interest. Young Adult (YA) books, particularly in the fantasy and romance genres, consistently received higher engagement, indicating that BookTok's audience gravitates toward emotionally compelling narratives. Similarly, adult books with strong fan communities, such as thrillers and high-fantasy novels, also gained substantial traction. Additionally, strategic communication techniques such as framing and storytelling emerged as dominant methods used in BookTok videos, further emphasizing the platform's persuasive power.

The findings also indicated that while most book-related TikTok content is organic, user engagement remains high even in the absence of paid promotions. This suggests that peer recommendations play a crucial role in influencing book-buying decisions. Moreover, the data highlights that viral book trends on TikTok often align with bestseller lists, demonstrating the platform's role in shaping literary consumption.

Focus Groups

The focus group discussions revealed how different generations interact with BookTok. Younger participants (primarily in their 20s) use TikTok as their primary source for book recommendations and emphasize the emotional and visual appeal of BookTok content. They often feel influenced by creators' enthusiasm and storytelling techniques, which prompt them to purchase books immediately after watching videos.

In contrast, older participants (ages 30–40s) take a more measured approach to BookTok. They recognize TikTok's role in book discovery but rarely base their purchasing decisions solely on the platform's recommendations. Instead, they cross-reference BookTok suggestions with Goodreads reviews, book club discussions, or professional literary critiques. This generational divide shows how social media affects reader behavior differently—young readers often respond to visual storytelling with impulse buys, while older readers seek more in-depth analysis before making a purchase.

H1 Findings

Influence of BookTok on Different Age Groups

The first hypothesis (H1) proposed that young adult readers gravitate more toward visual, peer-recommended content like TikTok, while older adults rely more on book club recommendations and reviews. The findings from both content analysis and focus group discussions strongly support this hypothesis.

Content Analysis Findings

The content analysis demonstrated that younger readers drive higher engagement metrics on BookTok, particularly in YA genres like fantasy and romance. These books received more likes, shares, and saves compared to adult fiction, indicating that younger audiences are more likely to be influenced by TikTok content. The presence of organic discussions, rather than paid promotions, suggests that peer recommendations play a substantial role in shaping their reading habits. Furthermore, the frequent use of storytelling and framing techniques within BookTok videos highlights how emotional appeal and narrative-driven content resonate with this demographic.

Conversely, books categorized as adult fiction exhibited more moderate engagement levels. While certain titles, particularly those with strong fan followings, still gained traction, they did not consistently reach the viral status of YA books. This aligns with the notion that older readers are less likely to rely on TikTok as a primary source for book recommendations and instead seek validation through external reviews and discussions.

Focus Group Findings for H1

The focus group discussions further emphasized the generational differences in BookTok's influence. Younger participants frequently described BookTok as their main tool for discovering new reads. They highlighted the role of visually compelling content and enthusiastic recommendations in their purchasing decisions, reinforcing the idea that TikTok serves as a form of peer-driven word-of-mouth marketing.

In contrast, older participants expressed more skepticism toward BookTok's influence, often stating that while they discovered books on the platform, they preferred to verify recommendations through traditional means such as Goodreads reviews or book club discussions. This generational divide underscores the differing levels of reliance on BookTok as a trusted source for book selection, with younger readers being more impressionable to TikTok's immediate appeal and older readers favoring a more methodical approach to book purchasing.

H2 Findings

Influence of Strategic Communication Techniques on BookTok

The second hypothesis (H2) proposed that TikTok influences the reading habits and purchasing behaviors of its #BookTok community through strategic communication techniques, including persuasion, framing, and storytelling. The findings from both content analysis and focus groups support this hypothesis.

Content Analysis Findings

The content analysis revealed that BookTok creators most commonly used framing and storytelling as strategic communication techniques. Framing—especially through emotional appeals—appeared in the majority of high-performing videos, showing that posts establishing a strong emotional connection tend to generate more engagement. Creators frequently used storytelling by sharing personal anecdotes or crafting immersive narratives that captivated viewers. While persuasion occurred less often, some posts still employed it through direct recommendations or clear calls to action. This lower frequency may be due to TikTok's platform culture, which favors authenticity and relatability over overt promotion. Unlike persuasion, which can feel "salesy" or insincere, storytelling and framing allow creators to subtly influence viewers while maintaining trust. These techniques align more closely with audience expectations and the algorithm's preference for emotionally engaging, shareable content. As a result, BookTok creators strategically prioritize methods that foster connection rather than direct persuasion.

Books featured in videos that used these techniques often achieved higher engagement metrics, reinforcing the idea that creators who skillfully apply framing and storytelling can more effectively influence purchasing decisions. Videos that connected emotionally with viewers or shared compelling stories frequently went viral, contributing to noticeable spikes in book sales. These patterns demonstrate the power of strategic communication on TikTok and position BookTok as a highly influential book marketing platform—especially when creators frame content in relatable, emotionally resonant ways and use storytelling to build trust and connection.

Focus Group Findings

The focus group discussions further validated the impact of strategic communication techniques on reader engagement. Younger participants reported being particularly influenced by BookTok videos that incorporated strong emotional framing, noting that they were more likely to purchase books that were presented in a way that resonated with their personal interests or experiences. Many participants cited videos that featured enthusiastic storytelling or personal testimonials as being the most compelling.

Older participants, while generally more skeptical of TikTok's influence, acknowledged that storytelling could be a powerful tool for capturing their attention. While they were less likely to make impulsive purchases based on BookTok videos, they did note that effective storytelling in TikTok content often motivated them to research books further before making a decision.

Overall, the findings indicate that TikTok's strategic communication techniques—especially framing and storytelling—play a critical role in shaping reading behaviors and book purchases, particularly among younger audiences.

Interpretation

The results indicate that BookTok functions as both a marketing tool and a social reading community, where peer recommendations carry substantial weight. Younger readers, in particular, are drawn to visually engaging content that conveys emotional reactions to books. Older readers, while aware of BookTok, tend to rely more on traditional review sources and book clubs before making purchasing decisions. This suggests that BookTok's influence is

generationally segmented, with younger readers prioritizing emotional engagement and older readers favoring critical discourse.

Furthermore, the analysis of engagement metrics highlights that books in certain genres, such as fantasy and romance, tend to perform better on BookTok than others. This is likely due to the emotionally compelling, escapist, and often idealized nature of these genres, which align well with TikTok's visually-driven, emotionally charged content format. Both fantasy and romance genres also have strong, dedicated fan communities, which may further amplify engagement as these readers are more likely to create and engage with content that celebrates these books. This reinforces the idea that TikTok is not only a space for discovering books but also for building communities around them.

Additionally, while younger readers are often seen as native digital users, this study highlights that word-of-mouth still plays a crucial role in their book-buying decisions, just as it does for older generations. What differentiates younger readers, however, is their tendency to engage with word-of-mouth through digital platforms, such as TikTok, where they often rely on the enthusiastic, visually engaging recommendations made by peers and creators. This highlights how young adults—while deeply immersed in digital spaces—still value the communal aspects of recommendation, much like older readers who turn to traditional sources like book clubs or in-person discussions.

A key distinction in the word-of-mouth behavior between young adults and older readers is that while both groups value peer recommendations, young adults are more likely to seek out and

trust digital reviews and recommendations that are embedded in visual content. They are digital natives who have grown up with social media as a primary means of communication, making them more inclined to follow and trust influencers or creators they encounter on platforms like TikTok. For YA readers, word-of-mouth is often conveyed through these digital touchpoints, where engagement is driven by compelling visuals, storytelling, and emotional appeal.

In contrast, older adults, while still appreciating word-of-mouth, tend to look for more traditional forms of validation, such as detailed reviews on Goodreads or recommendations within book clubs. Their word-of-mouth process is typically more research-driven, where they cross-reference reviews and seek out more structured, critical discourse before making decisions.

This suggests that while young adults are certainly more inclined to engage with digital recommendations, the fundamental human behavior of seeking peer validation through word-of-mouth is consistent across generations. However, the platforms and the nature of these recommendations—whether digital and visual for young adults or more textual and research-oriented for older readers—differ significantly, highlighting the evolving ways in which word-of-mouth operates in the digital age.

The relatively low presence of paid promotions in BookTok content underscores the authenticity of user-generated recommendations, which strengthens the trust readers place in the platform. This organic nature of BookTok suggests that its influence is more about community-driven excitement and peer recommendations than it is about overt marketing.

Conclusions

This research confirms that BookTok is a key driver of book engagement and purchasing behavior, particularly among younger audiences. The findings support the hypotheses that younger readers gravitate toward visually engaging and emotionally resonant content, while older readers rely on established reading communities. Moreover, the study reveals that strategic communication techniques, especially framing and storytelling, are central to BookTok's effectiveness as a book marketing tool.

Contribution to the Field

This study adds to the growing body of research on digital reading communities by providing empirical evidence of how BookTok shapes literary engagement. It builds on prior research about online book discussions by showing how short-form video content directly influences reader behavior. The findings demonstrate the evolving nature of book marketing, revealing that organic social media engagement can rival, and in some cases surpass, traditional promotional strategies in effectiveness. As platforms like TikTok continue to grow, they offer authors, publishers, and marketers new opportunities to reach readers in ways that feel more personal, authentic, and emotionally resonant.

A key factor behind BookTok's influence lies in the strategic communication techniques its creators employ—namely framing, storytelling, and persuasion. Framing, especially through emotional appeals, helps creators establish immediate and powerful connections with their audiences, making the content more engaging and memorable. Storytelling strengthens that

connection by weaving personal anecdotes or immersive narratives that draw viewers in and encourage emotional investment. While persuasion appears less frequently, posts that feature direct recommendations or calls to action still play a significant role in shaping consumer decisions.

Together, these techniques amplify the effectiveness of BookTok videos, helping certain books go viral and driving noticeable increases in sales. By leveraging these communication strategies, BookTok creators transform casual content into a dynamic form of literary marketing, highlighting the platform's broader cultural and commercial impact.

Practical Influence on the Field

The findings offer practical insights for authors, publishers, and marketers aiming to use BookTok for book promotion. Publishers can collaborate with BookTok influencers to boost book visibility, while authors can connect with readers by sharing authentic, personal content. Librarians and educators can also draw on BookTok trends to recommend books that reflect current reader interests, strengthening the connection between digital communities and traditional literary institutions.

Further Research

Although this study offers valuable insights, future research should explore additional dimensions of BookTok's impact. Longitudinal studies could track whether BookTok-driven book sales lead to sustained reader interest or fade over time. Comparative research might examine how BookTok's influence stacks up against other platforms like Instagram, Goodreads,

or even Reddit reading communities. Platforms like Goodreads emphasize cataloging, reviews, and star ratings, while BookTok thrives on emotional appeal and visual storytelling—highlighting key differences in how readers engage with books across services. Researchers might also explore how BookTok shapes perceptions of literature, particularly in terms of diversity and representation, to gain a deeper understanding of the platform's cultural significance.

In conclusion, this study highlights BookTok as a transformative force in contemporary reading culture. By connecting social media with literary engagement, BookTok changes how readers discover, discuss, and experience books.

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Code Book Data

- Date Posted

- Number of Likes - #

- Number of Comments - #

- Number of Saves - #

- Number of Shares - #

- Number of Hashtags - #

- Presence/ Absence of User Review

    - 1 - Present

    - 2 - Absent

- Any Negative Evaluation

    - 1 - Yes

    - 2 - No

- Presence/ Absence of Paid Promotion

    - 1 - Present

    - 2- Absent

- SC Techniques Used

    - 1 - Persuasion

    - 2 - Framing

    - 3 - Storytelling

    - 4 - N/A

BookTok Focus Group Protocol

Objective

This focus group aims to explore the influence of TikTok's #BookTok community on reading habits and book purchasing behaviors. Specifically, it will investigate:

- Whether younger readers rely more on TikTok for book recommendations compared to older readers, who may favor traditional book clubs.
- How BookTok's strategic communication techniques (persuasion, framing, storytelling) shape readers' decisions.

I. Introduction

Welcome & Ground Rules

- Introduce yourself and the purpose of the discussion.
- Explain that participants will watch a selection of BookTok videos during the session and discuss whether they find them persuasive.
- Emphasize that participation is voluntary and responses will remain confidential.
- Encourage open discussion and respect for differing opinions.
- Ask participants to speak one at a time and to avoid interrupting others.

Participant Introductions

- Name (or pseudonym)
- Age range (e.g., 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, etc.)

- How frequently do you use TikTok?

- How would you describe your reading habits (e.g., casual, avid, genre preferences)?

- How do you typically find books to read? (e.g., TikTok, book clubs, bestseller lists, recommendations from friends, libraries, bookstores) WOM

II. Book Discovery & Recommendations

For those who use TikTok: (Prompts)

- What drew you to BookTok?

- What kind of book-related content do you engage with most (e.g., reviews, aesthetic videos, personal recommendations, trend-based books)?

For those who do not rely on TikTok: (Prompt)

- Where do you typically turn for book recommendations?

III. Influence of BookTok on Reading & Purchasing Behavior (Video Component)
Introduction to Video Exercise:

- "Now, we're going to watch eight (two for YA and two for adult) different BookTok videos. After each video, I'll ask some questions about how persuasive you found it and whether it would influence your book purchasing decisions."

- "As you watch, think about what stands out to you—whether it's the way the book is presented, the emotions it evokes, or any specific strategies the creator uses."

Video 1: Persuasive Recommendation (e.g., an enthusiastic, emotional review)

Discussion Questions

What stood out to you in this video?

- Did it make you interested in the book? Why or why not?

- Do you find emotional appeals effective when choosing a book?

Video 2: Aesthetic/Trend-Based Book Promotion (e.g., a viral "must-read" book with cinematic visuals)

Discussion Questions

- Does the visual appeal of a book influence your interest in it?

- Do you feel like you've seen books being promoted this way before?

Video 3: Critical/Controversial Take (e.g., a BookTokker discussing a book's flaws but still recommending it)

Discussion Questions

- How did this type of review impact your perception of the book?

- Do you find mixed or critical reviews more trustworthy than overly positive ones?

- Would you still consider purchasing the book?

Video 4: Storytelling Approach (e.g., the creator shares a personal story that connects to the book's theme)

Discussion Questions

- How did the personal storytelling aspect influence your interest in the book?

- Did you feel more emotionally connected to the recommendation?

- Do you think this technique is more or less effective than a straightforward review?

Generational Differences in Book Discovery & Influence

- Looking back at the videos, which one was the most persuasive to you? Why?

- Do you think BookTok has a stronger influence on younger readers compared to older readers? Why or why not?

For older participants (if applicable):

- Do you participate in book clubs?

- How do book club recommendations compare to BookTok recommendations in terms of influence?

For younger participants:

- Have you ever joined a book club?

- Would you consider traditional book clubs, or do you prefer online reading communities like BookTok?

- How do you feel about BookTok as a source of book recommendations?

- How do you feel about BookTok as a source of book recommendations?

Closing Reflections

Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience with BookTok?

Thank participants for their time and insights.

- Let them know how their responses will contribute to the research.

- Provide contact information in case they have follow-up thoughts.