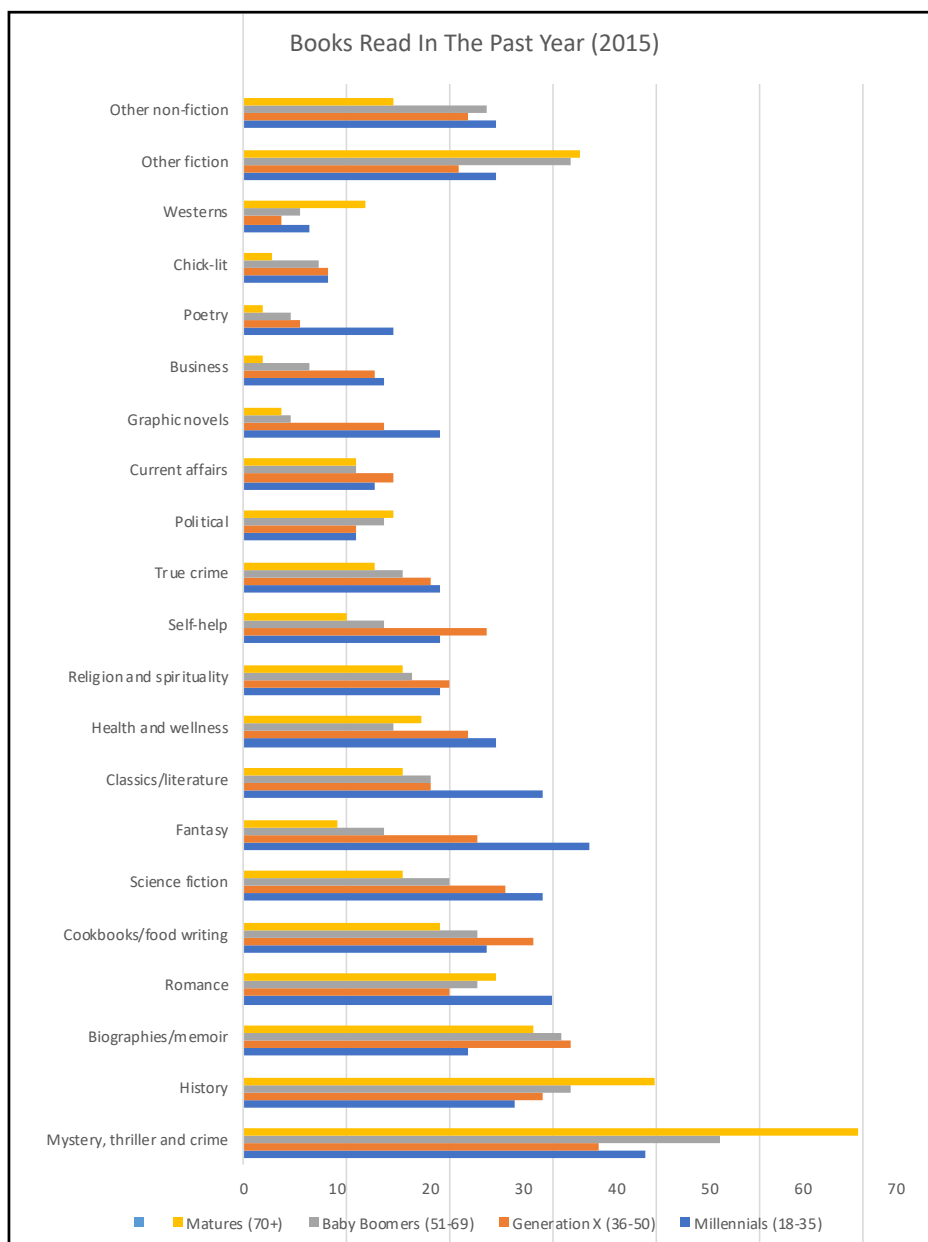


The Importance of Researching Trends in Book Genre

Over the years, the publishing industry has collected essential data that helps them determine what readers are interested in. These data collections are very sought after and provide a fundamental analysis of the book market. There are numerous companies and independent analysts that offer services that tap into this information gold mine. Understanding the most successful book demographics and statistics is crucial in setting a marketing campaign for a new novel, signing deals with authors, and producing material that will capture the desired audience.

A common way to separate the incoming data from readers is to divide it into age groups. Doing this allows publishing houses to focus on specific groups and take control of that market. For example, in 2015, Harris Interactive, a market research company, released some results of an online survey with 2,273 participants. People were asked what book genres they had read in the past year.

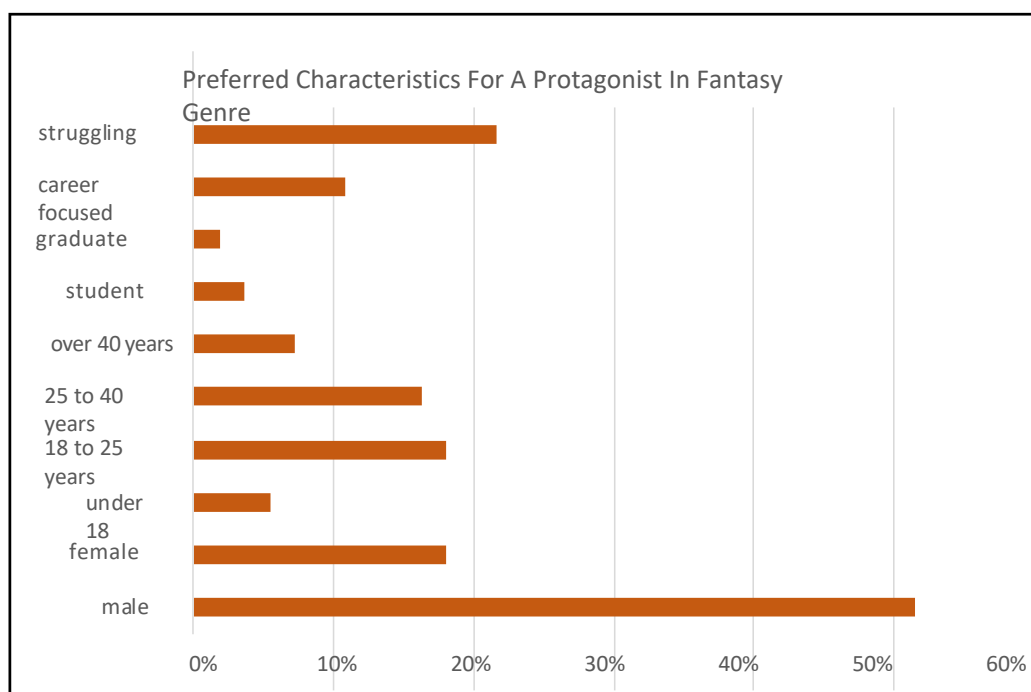


The data age groups were Millennials, Generation X, Baby Boomers, and Matures. The graph above clearly shows that the mystery/thriller/crime genre is the most popular among all age groups. 51% of Baby Boomers (51-69) said they had read this genre, along with 43% of Millennials (18-35) and 38% of Generation X (36-50). But the most common age group for this genre was Matures (70+), with 66%. With this pattern, it is safe to say that this genre's popularity increases as age increases.

Another similar effect occurs with the history genre. History gains more popularity as it increases in age group. Millennials reported 29%, Generation X increased to 32%, Baby Boomers reported 35%, and Matures gave a solid 44%. The most significant leap in the history genre is between Baby Boomers and Matures, with a 9% increase in popularity. This gap is more potent than the set 3% increase between Millennials and Generation X and Generation X and Baby Boomers. From Millennials to Matures, the popularity triples in intervals of three each time until it reaches the 9% increase.

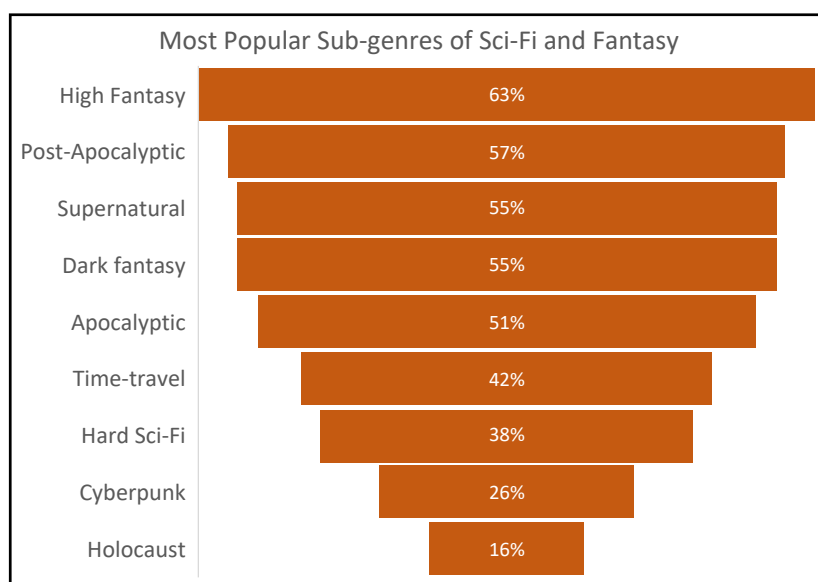
The history genre isn't the only one with this effect. Chick-lit poetry and graphic novels decrease in popularity as age increases. Poetry starts at 16% with Millennials, an already low number, and ends at 2% with matures. The same happens with graphic novels. It starts at 21% with Millennials, drops to 15% with Baby Boomers, and ends at 4% with Matures. Chick-lit is the minor read genre in the survey. Only 9% of Millennials and Generation X reported having read the genre in the past year. Then it significantly drops to 3% for Mature readers.

It is not surprising that Chick-lit is a minor read genre due to the controversies around the genre. In 2013, The Atlantic published an article that interviewed several publishers, and they all agreed that the Chick-lit was dying. However, later in 2016, Refinery29 released a list titled, "The Chick-Lit Books That Won't Destroy The Feminist Inside You" stirred mixed emotions for Bridget Jones's die-hard fans. There has been a lot of criticism around Chick-Lit, where it is described as a hybrid of magazine articles and easy-to-read books for a night in.



But the exciting part is that Chick-Lit is essentially focused on female protagonists. So, who do readers want as protagonists? This question merges seamlessly with the rise in popularity of the fantasy genre over the last few years. In 2017 content writer Tina Dubinsky surveyed 500 participants, and 81.6% of them reported fantasy to be their favorite genre. The survey later focuses on protagonist characteristics that readers found more appealing within the fantasy genre.

The survey revealed that 57% of participants preferred a male protagonist in fantasy books. They also leaned more toward struggling issues instead of career-focused. A default of the fantasy genre is the fantastic elements, so it was expected that only 6% of combined participants chose student or graduate protagonists. But then the most popular age bracket was for 18 to 25 years old. These statistics carve out the question, ‘ what are these young adults supposed to be doing?’ For a solid protagonist profile, the survey asked what sub-genres of fantasy the participants preferred.

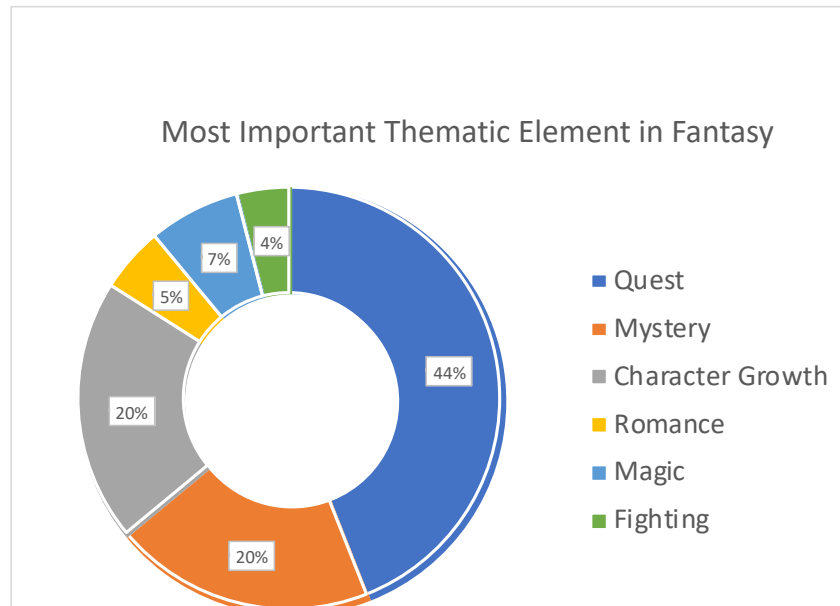


High fantasy was the most popular, while Holocaust was the least popular sub-genre. According to the Encyclopedia of Science Fiction, high fantasy is defined by the epic nature of its setting or epic stature of its characters, plots, and themes. The most famous high fantasy books include the series *A Song of Ice and Fire* by George R. R. Martin and *The Lord of the Rings* by J. R. R. Tolkien. The Holocaust sub-genre is a niche definition that refers to a catastrophe directly caused by humans or, in some cases, alien action. This sub-genre is a blanket term in the Science-Fiction world that has little to no connection to the World War II genocide.

However, its name is highly debated due to the delicate relationship between literature and dark moments in history. In 2011, Menachem Kaiser, a writer for *The Atlantic*, published an article that explained why it was a difficult relationship, “Good literature makes artistic demands, flexes and contorts narratives, resists limpid morality, compromises reality’s details.”

Regarding the Holocaust, this seems excessive, even blasphemous. The horrors of Auschwitz and Buchenwald need no artistic amplification.” This sub-genre has some exceptions that pay proper respect without much creative license. For example, *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak and *Sophie’s Choice* by William Styron is educational must-reads, whereas *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* by John Boyne has been called out for historical inaccuracies.

To research the perfect Fantasy setting, the survey also asked which thematic elements were the most important to the readers.



The thematic elements align with the preferred age for protagonists in the survey because most novels with protagonists 18-25 are heavily based on quests, mystery, and character growth. Here's where the young adult fantasy genre thrives with series like *The Mortal Instruments* by Cassandra Clare and *Folklore of the Air* by Holly Black. As young adult fantasy evolves, there are smaller chances of including romance as the central theme. One of the few exceptions to the downfall of romance is *The Selection* series by Kiera Cass, even though the last book was published in 2016.

One of the reasons why the cultural phenomenon of Harry Potter isn't representing magic in the survey is because Harry Potter is considered middle-grade fiction, not young adult. The people on the survey were over the age of eighteen, and that is reflected based on the choices they made through the questionnaire.

With the rise of the fantasy genre, it will be interesting to see which elements such as plotting, themes, and characters are needed to create a best-seller. A thorough market analysis is always necessary when a publishing house wants to crank out captivating books that rank up the profits. It is also essential for authors who are fishing for ideas and want to know what people are currently reading.

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