THE ROLE OF BOOK CONTENT AND INFLUENCERS ON TIKTOK IN MARKETING OF BOOKS

TikTokin kirjasisällön ja vaikuttajien rooli kirjojen markkinoinnissa

ABSTRACT

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The role of book content and influencers on TikTok in marketing of books

Bachelor's thesis

2022

42 pages, 1 figure, 2 tables and 1 appendix

Examiner: Junior researcher Amanda Piepponen

Keywords: Influencer marketing, marketing strategy, social media, TikTok, BookTok

TikTok has reached a substantial success as a social media platform, especially among young people and one of the formed subcultures, BookTok strongly influences the selling and marketing of books with its content regarding books. Businesses and influencers are able to benefit from the short, entertaining videos in their marketing strategies to gain awareness and reach potential customers. The aim of this bachelor's thesis is to improve the understanding of how book content from influencers can affect the selling and marketing of young adult and new adult books. The purpose of this research is to also increase understanding of how the businesses marketing as well as selling books could benefit from influencer marketing on TikTok considering YA and NA books.

This research was conducted as qualitative research using previous studies and theoretical knowledge. This study used semi-structured interviews from people working in companies that sell and market books and are familiar with the topic of the research. The interviews were conducted online using remote tools with pre-determined questions; however, the participant was able to answer freely without given answer options.

The empirical findings from the analysed interviews show that companies are not yet strongly utilizing influencer marketing on TikTok in their marketing strategy, however, companies are creating their own content on this social media platform. Finding the relevant and suitable influencers on this relatively fresh platform proved to be quite challenging and creating own content on TikTok, as a business, enables building connections and interactions as well as increasing awareness of the company.

TikTok on viime vuosina saavuttanut suuren suosion sosiaalisen median alustana, etenkin nuorten keskuudessa ja sen alakulttuuriksi muodostunut BookTok vaikuttaa sisällöllään vahvasti kirjojen markkinointiin ja myyntiin. Yritykset ja vaikuttajat voivat hyödyntää lyhyitä, viihdyttäviä videoita markkinoinnissaan saadakseen näkyvyyttä ja saavuttaakseen potentiaalisia asiakkaita. Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena on ymmärtää paremmin, kuinka vaikuttajien luoma kirjasisältö vaikuttaa nuorten aikuisten kirjojen myyntiin ja markkinointiin. Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on myös lisätä ymmärrystä siitä, miten kirjoja myyvät sekä markkinoivat yritykset voisivat hyötyä vaikuttajamarkkinoinnista TikTokissa nuorten aikuisten kirjoja koskien.

Tämä tutkimus toteutettiin laadullisena tutkimuksena hyödyntäen aikaisempia tutkimuksia ja teoreettista tietoa. Tutkimuksessa hyödynnetään puolistrukturoituja haastatteluja henkilöiltä, jotka työskentelevät kirjoja myyvissä sekä markkinoivissa yrityksissä ja tuntevat tutkimuksen aiheen. Haastattelut toteutettiin etäyhteyksillä ennalta suunniteltujen kysymysten avulla, kuitenkin niin, että haastateltava sai vastata vapaasti ilman annettuja vastausvaihtoehtoja.

Empiiriset tulokset analysoiduista haastatteluista osoittavat, että yritykset eivät vielä kovin hyödynnä vaikuttajamarkkinointia TikTokissa markkinointistrategiassaan, mutta luovat itse sisältöä tälle sosiaalisen median alustalle. Sopivien vaikuttajien löytäminen suhteellisen uudelta alustalta osoittautuu haastavaksi ja oman sisällön luominen TikTokiin mahdollistaa yhteyksien ja vuorovaikutuksen luomisen sekä tietoisuuden lisäämisen.

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1 Introduction

This section presents the background to this research and why it requires researching. This introduction chapter will provide information about how this report is constructed, present a short literature review of previous studies in addition to what methods are used. It will also cover the research gap and research questions, as well as the main goals of this study. Key concepts are also explained to ensure the reader understands the concepts in this research context.

1.1 Background of the research

Social media has made its way fundamentally into billions of people's daily lives and in 2015 nearly 65% of all adults, 82% of population of +15-year-olds and 90% of all young adults used social media sites. It has been affecting all aspects of living since its rise, constantly evolving, and changing structures, such as how people behave, communicate, search for information and work. (Perrin, 2015) A new form of marketing has also emerged from the increased use of social media when businesses realized they need to change their marketing strategy to fit the altering needs of consumers and shifts of digital platforms. Social media marketing offers a new way to target customers, provide updates and create awareness and buzz regarding brands. Alongside more traditional marketing outlets and social media marketing strategies, a new strategy, influencer marketing has provided numerous advantages for marketing within recent years. (Zhu & Chen, 2015; Stephen, 2016) Influencer marketing has become relevant to consumer-based companies and brands. Influencers represent a new strategy to reach younger generations and build brand image variously through their social media content. However, it requires businesses to understand social media and its platforms as well as its users. (Haenlein et al., 2020)

Over last few years, TikTok and Instagram have been highly popular platforms for influencer marketing since they attract consumers aged 20 to 30 who targeted mostly with this marketing strategy and communication. These platforms are also made for content based on pictures and videos which work significantly better when conducting influencer marketing instead of just using text-based platforms since they create entertainment which attracts

followers easier and keeps them engaged. (Haenlein et al., 2020) TikTok is a Chinese social media app where people create short videos about a variation of topics, and it has been able to succeed internationally. It had over 1.2 billion monthly users at the end of 2021, and it is expected to reach 1.8 billion by the end of 2022. Most of the users are between 20 and 29 years old and a majority of all the users are under the age of 39. The gender distribution is quite equal, even though there are slightly more females. When comparing TikTok to other popular social media platforms it places fifth behind Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp and Instagram. TikTok has a high popularity among Generation Z (people born in 1997-2012) and millennials (1981-1996) as well as Instagram and they are one of the most popular social media platforms, among younger people, for content creation and influencers, therefore, influencer marketing as well. (Iqbal, 2022)

Many subcultures have been formed in TikTok and one of them is BookTok, a subculture for readers to discuss books that emerged around the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022 the hashtag #booktok had reached 81 billion views and other variations of this hashtag such as #booksoftiktok and #booktiktok hundreds of millions of views as well. This book community is a means for readers to communicate about their interests, recommend books, discuss on reading in general and share their experiences how they feel comfortable. BookTok is not regulated, and people are not forced to join it by the instructions of teachers or parents. It is a casual community, and it can encourage young people to read and creatively discuss their thoughts with like-minded people with its engaging content. (Merga, 2021; Jerasa & Boffone, 2021) Delemos (2021) states that within this book community, content creators are providing free word-of-mouth advertising to authors and books by just uploading videos. Because of this, businesses may have issues trying to harness BookTok as a marketing strategy, since the short, creative videos usually spread organically amongst user-generated content creators and users with the use of word-of-mouth and not as much with paid sponsorships or influencers. The focus on BookTok has been largely on young adult books, however it has started to spread to other genres also, such as adult fiction, classics, and nonfiction. Jensen (2022) writes that books that gain attention on BookTok tend to trend for a long time and are also often featured on their own display in bookstores. The marketing of books is currently involving emotions expressed through music and videos on social media and it may be the future of book marketing. (Mcllroy, 2022) Researching this topic is relevant and it could provide understanding of the means to engage literacy to younger people as well as study the revolutionizing effect of social media, influencers,

creative content, and communication on booksellers as well as people and their consumer behaviour.

Social media has been greatly studied over the years since it became relevant and started changing the structures of internet, communication, and marketing as they were known prior social media. Zhu & Chen (2015) studied the implications for social media marketing stating that the results of social media marketing campaigns are usually unsatisfactory, and businesses should know their product and target users as well as the platform they are using and understand the differences to gain the best outcome. Stephen (2016) focused on the role of social media in consumer behaviour and identified different themes, such as consumer digital culture and mobile environments, discussed when studying consumers and digital marketing and online WOM was the most repeated theme. Peters et al. (2013) researched guidelines and framework for social media and presented a theoretical framework and nine guidelines to help businesses navigating in social media and assessing their metrics by importance themselves rather than always trusting social network operators that can produce irrelevant metrics regarding the marketing decisions of the company.

Alongside social media, influencer marketing and influencers, word-of-mouth (WOM) have been studied excessively in recent years when their strategic importance became known. Taylor (2020) presented an urgent need for more research on influencer marketing sensing COVID-19 pandemic had accelerated the influence of influencer marketing. The report addresses the need of academic research of measurement accuracy and impact of influencers taking on multiple sponsors for instance as well as the issue of micro and macro influencers. Belanche et al. (2021) studied the role of congruence between influencers, products and consumers focusing on Instagram and understanding influencer marketing implicating that high congruence between influencer and consumer leads to strong congruence between consumer and products, therefore, generating positive attitude and higher purchase intentions which is the optimal result of influencer marketing. Donthu et al. (2021) mapped the eWOM research as a systematic review and noticed that negative WOM, consumer behaviour, eWOM, brand loyalty and user-generated content and viral marketing were among the recently studied topics. eWOM will also remain relevant as a credible way to form an opinion and it continues to connect more with social media platforms such as TikTok.

While social media and influencers are researched significantly, there are not as many studies about TikTok, influencers and their content as well as user-generated content there and its effects on society. Haenlein et al. (2020) researched the era of influencer marketing and how to succeed in different social media platforms, especially TikTok and Instagram, presenting implications for firms regarding influencers marketing. They provided four pieces of advice for businesses to succeed in social media. Companies need to understand different platforms and their culture, realize how influencer marketing can be complex, choose between micro and macro influencers and give influencers space to create content without controlling them too closely. Jerasa & Boffone (2021) and Merga (2021) studied BookTok community on TikTok as well as young people's reading practices. Jerasa & Boffone (2021) address the inclusion of BookTok to literacy practices at school and libraries as well as understanding the digital community shaping young people and their reading habits. They suggest many various ways for teachers and librarians to engage students with the help of BookTok and how it could teach them valuable skills in dissecting the meaning in digital literacies as well as alluring young people to read. Merga (2021) studied the popular hashtags and recurring themes as well as books on BookTok stating that firstly, hashtags build community and reader identity, secondly books and authors are usually a selected group that can be limited and lastly the recurring themes revolve around recommendations, emotional response, and reader experience as well as the characters and book community. Despite these studies, the research on book content, influencers creating it on TikTok and the book community affecting young people is relatively low while it is transforming book industry and marketing. The content on TikTok is strongly driven with user-generated content, however businesses and influencers have not yet been as active as general users creating book content and gaining virality. Whether the TikTok algorithm is affecting the flow of videos, or the content created by influencers is not as engaging or authentic as general users' content and therefore not as popular, its effect on marketing strategies and businesses has not yet been extensively studied. Hence, additional studies on influencer marketing and UGC on TikTok, especially content related to books are needed.

1.2 Research objectives and questions

The aim of this research is to examine how the content related to books, created by influencers and users in TikTok, affects the marketing and selling of young adult (YA, 12-

18 old target readers) and new adult (NA, 18-30 old target readers) books, especially in Finland. The purpose of this study is to understand how the changed customer behaviour and content created and shared by influencers as well as businesses on TikTok has affected the marketing and selling of books from the perspective of booksellers and book marketers since BookTok was founded. This research will also investigate if booksellers and -marketers, such as bookshops and libraries in Finland, will or have made changes to their marketing strategy due to the influence BookTok possesses considering trending books and influencer marketing as well as book content on TikTok.

There are two research questions in total to reach the purpose of this study and they will be answered later in this study when the findings are analysed. The research questions are formed to answer the objective of this research.

> *RQ1: What kind of role does book content on TikTok have on the selling and marketing of young adult and new adult books?*

> *RQ2: How could booksellers and book marketers benefit from the influencer marketing on TikTok concerning YA and NA books?*

1.3 Definitions of the key concepts

The key concepts of this study are briefly explained within this chapter. The explanation of the key concepts will help the reader understand the concepts within this research context. It is also important to have a clear vision of the theoretical concepts used within this study when conducting the interviews.

Social media

Internet-based platforms and applications that combine interactive communication systems and social actors. It allows user-generated content, actors to communicate, create, and share

content as well as it allows companies to engage with users. (Peters et al., 2013; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010)

Influencer

A new category of opinion leaders whose success relies on the content they create and how they interact with their followers, a sizeable social network of people. They focus on a more segmented audience and represent a new marketing strategic as self-made "microcelebrities". (Belanche et al., 2021; Harrigan et al., 2021)

Influencer marketing

Influencers usually share their content on a social media platform to a group who shares similar thoughts and interests, gain respect of their followers, and seem to appear more trustworthy. They are known for their social media content and can influence their followers with being opinion leaders on purchases, products, or brands. Campaigns can focus on recommendations, engagement, awareness, or attitudes toward the sponsored brand. (Belanche et al., 2021; Haenlein et al., 2020)

User-generated content

User-generated content is content shared within social media created by the public and general users instead of paid and sponsored influencers or professionals. It appears to others as entertaining or useful and is quite inexpensive. (Daugherty, Eastin & Bright, 2008; Krumm, Davies & Narayanaswami, 2008).

Word-of-mouth (WOM), electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM)

Consumers share their views, experiences, recommendations, and opinions concerning brands, products or services and influence each other by spreading information. Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) is WOM in an electronic form, such as likes, comments, images, videos, blog posts and reviews. (Donthu et al., 2021) Viral marketing is usually connected

to WOM since it can be either positive or negative and consists of WOM and a marketing message exponentially growing within social media. (Zhong et al., 2018; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011)

BookTok (and Bookstagram)

TikTok and Instagram subcultures where users and readers can discuss, review, and recommend books to others dedicated to reading by creating and commenting on videos, therefore, transforming publishing and best-seller lists. The content is usually UGC or influencer generated and content can be strongly connected to eWOM. (Jerasa & Boffone, 2021; Merga, 2021)

1.4 Research methods

The methods used to conduct the empirical sections of this study are qualitative methods. They frequently provide an answer to larger, open questions and enable more specific research to certain topics and cases focusing on meaning and motivation. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018) The primary source of information within this research is interviews. These interviews are to be semi-structured, with open-ended questions that are prepared before the interview. These interviews are flexible and focus on the interviewee's perspectives and opinions. (Denny & Weckesser, 2022; Creswell & Creswell, 2018) The interviewees are selected with purposive and snowball sampling, and the interviewees are representatives from bookseller companies and libraries with appropriate knowledge about the topic considering marketing strategies and BookTok content. The semi-structured interviews are conducted anonymously via Teams, recorded, transcribed, and analysed later. The findings are analysed by using qualitative content analysis and implications as well as discussion about the results are provided in the empirical chapter of this study.

1.5 Delimitations of this research

This research requires delimitations to be able to conduct it in time and keep it from expanding excessively. Firstly, the researching of social media is limited into only one social media platform, TikTok, even though Instagram is also briefly investigated in the literature review, since it has many similar features concerning influencer marketing and content creation. Instagram also has its own book community, like BookTok, called Bookstagram, however, studying both communities would expand this research inordinately.

Secondly, the interviewees are limited to booksellers and marketers, such as librarians and product managers from bookshops in Finland since they participated the interviews and cannot represent bookshops and libraries internationally, whereas consumers, or influencers are not interviewed since the research questions will be needing information from businesses and book marketers because of the scope of this study. The aim of this study is to understand how companies and businesses have experienced the effect of TikTok when marketing and selling books, therefore, it limits the interviewees as well as this research topic. The marketing representatives were also thought to be more easily reachable and categorized than gathering enough users or influencers as participants from the book community.

Thirdly, the users of TikTok and Instagram are relatively young and BookTok is mainly focusing on young adult (YA) and new adult (NA) books, which explains why this research is also limited to study those genres (Jensen, 2022; McIlroy, 2022).

Lastly, there are also some theoretical delimitations of this research which consist of key concepts used or discarded as well as topics that are similar than the topic of this study. The spread of information in BookTok can be described as organic word-of-mouth, user-generated content and viral marketing which are closely related to the concept of influencer marketing (Delemos, 2021). Closer look at the social media marketing and influencer marketing will be conducted in the literature review, however, social media marketing will not be studied as closely, since the focus is mainly on influencer marketing and eWOM on one social media platform and social media marketing is such a large topic. Brand awareness and image building are usually relevant when studying topics related to social media marketing, but they are not included within this research, the concept being too broad for this use since the study is focused on influencer marketing and marketing strategies (Godey et al., 2016). There has also been discussion whether books and authors are considered as

brands the same way other consumer goods are because of their tangible nature. Some consumers do not identify with the publisher or author the same way when buying a book as they identify with the brand when buying a different product and the discussion about this perception is too broad for this research. (Royle, Cooper & Stockdale, 1999)

1.6 Structure of the research

This research constructs of five individual chapters. The first section is the introduction chapter, what presents the background of the topic and the need for this research. The second chapter includes literature review and theoretical framework. Research methods are examined in the third part, as well as the data collection and analysis. The fourth chapter presents the empirical part of this research and analyses the research findings based on the interviews. Finally, the last chapter will conclude this research, answer the research questions, and investigate the reliability of this study, as well as need for future research.

2 Literature review

This chapter presents a literature review based on previous academic research and investigates social media marketing, influencer marketing, user-generated content (UGC), word-of-mouth (WOM), viral marketing and TikTok as well as its subculture, book community, BookTok. The literature review is built on the previous studies presented in the introduction chapter deepening the knowledge and examining the connection between previous research and the topic of this thesis. Theoretical framework is also formed in this section since it focuses on these concepts of influencer marketing on social media, and book related content on TikTok and outlines the topic that is examined within this study.

2.1 Social media marketing

Social media is, as described before, internet-based platforms and applications that combine interactive communication systems and social actors. It allows actors to communicate, create, and share content as well as it allows companies to engage with users (Peters et al., 2013). Li, Larimo and Leonidou (2020) define social media marketing (SMM) and its strategy as company's activities that use social media communications and interactions to achieve desirable marketing outcomes by understanding customers' needs and motivations.

Social media marketing can be extremely useful and effective when used correctly, improving brand image and loyalty as well as spreading awareness and nurturing customer relationships. However, it can also be ineffective if the culture of the platforms and users' motivations are not understood thoroughly. Therefore, it is crucial to choose the right platform to engage directly with consumers and achieve better performance than with traditional communication tools. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Haenlein et al., 2020) Zhu & Chen (2015) suggest that "one possibility is incongruence between the nature of social media and marketing since users go on social media to connect with people, whereas marketers go on social media to sell things" as a reason why social media marketing strategy is not as effective as expected.

Social media platforms can be presented simplified within a two-by-two matrix using profile-based or content-based and customized or broadcasted message defining the culture of each platform as shown in table 1. Profile-based platforms with customized messages, labeled *relationship*, such as Facebook, allow users to connect and communicate, whereas using broadcast message services, *self-media,* like Twitter, allows users to update their page and others to follow. Content-based services with customized messages, *collaboration,* such as Reddit, lets users to find advice or help, whereas broadcast message platforms, *creative outlets,* invite their users to share their creativity, interests and thought with each other. (Zhu & Chen, 2015) Currently, many social media platforms combine these features, and they cannot be separated easily into just one type. TikTok and Instagram can be seen combining all these features since they allow users to connect and communicate, follow others, find advice, and share their creativity and interests.

Table 1. Social media matrix (Zhu & Chen, 2015)

	customized message	*broadcast message*
profile-based	relationship	self-media
content-based	collaboration	creative outlets

Zhu & Chen (2015) also present implications for effective SMM using the four types of social media. Firstly, stating how SMM actions should improve relationships or build new ones, secondly, leverage the power of celebrities, since they are a channel of influence, thirdly, connecting people to things they want to know about and share valuable information through collaboration and lastly, extend aesthetics to purchases by using creative content, thus providing pleasure and stimulation for viewers, and offering recognition.

Li, Larimo & Leonidou (2020) present a taxonomy of social media marketing strategies with four adaptations called social commerce strategy, social content strategy, social monitoring strategy and social CRM strategy. *The social commerce strategy* is a one-way interaction with an objective to promote and sell by using customer's social network whereas *social content strategy* is a two-way interaction initiated by the firm where the company's objective is to connect and collaborate by creating compelling content and thereby attracting audience and customers. A two-way interaction initiated by the customer is a listening and response objective process that allows marketers to become engaged and learn, called *social monitoring strategy*. Lastly, *social CRM strategy*, which is a collaborative way to empower and engage audience, is strategically mature and building a trusting relationship leading to mutual value.

Stephen (2016) identified five themes about consumers in digital and social media marketing settings from recent research relating in consumer behaviour. Consumer digital culture, advertising, impacts of digital environment, mobile, and online WOM and reviews, which was the topic that cased the most academic interest. Electronic word-of-mouth or viral marketing have been of interest over the years; however, the grown use of influencer marketing has piqued the interest and use of eWOM and viral marketing. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011; Haenlein et al., 2020)

2.2 Influencer marketing

Social media marketing has evolved over the years and a new strategy, influencer marketing emerged. Social media marketing and influencer marketing are inevitably connected since influencers gain followers and share their content on social media platforms and the platforms achieve audience and stay appealing to users with the assistance of influencers and their content. Influencers have become famous through social media and their reputation relies on their content. They provide information, recommendations, and opinions to their followers, who usually share the same interests, and act as an example and innovation for them. Additionally, influencers can create brand awareness and image as well as enhance purchase decisions and attitudes toward certain companies, brands, or products, which is called influencer marketing. (Haenlein et al., 2020; Taylor, 2020; Belanche et al., 2021)

People tend to trust the influencers they follow more easily than, for example, traditional celebrities since influencers tend to feel more organic and authentic with potential consumers. Users follow influencers who seem similar to them and that affects positively to the attitudes toward the recommended brand. However, heavily managed content may seem inauthentic and question the motives of the influencer, thus affect the awareness negatively. (Lou & Yuan, 2019) Influencers know how to speak to and approach their followers and establish relationships with brands, and they can be a lucrative as well as affordable way to gain return on the investment (Nordqvist, 2018).

In Instagram, influencers rely wholly on their visibility, followers and likes if they do not have a sponsorship with a company since Instagram does not pay its influencers. Instagram is built on sharing pictures and stories whereas TikTok concentrates on short videos with appealing music or sounds from movies and TV shows. Usually, influencers and companies have one main platform where the content is shared. (Haenlein et al., 2020) TikTok has the highest engagement rate of all social media platforms and there is a lot of user-generated and influencer-generated content on which businesses are disregarding when they are not involved in influencer marketing on TikTok (Geyser, 2020).

According to Myhrman (2019), influencer marketing can be divided into earned and paid categories since currently anyone can become an influencer, comparable to organic and sponsored posts within social media marketing. Earned influence consist of people exchanging opinions and thoughts organically, whereas paid influence is paying the

influencer to talk about the brand. When the company creates content itself and shares it on their own social media sites or web sites it is called owned media.

User-generated and influencer-generated content can be called earned media and it connects to eWOM and WOM as well as entertaining content on social media, since users are compelled by the product or the brand and wish to share their opinions and promote the company. Earned media is sometimes perceives more trustworthy and credible than paid media. If companies send users products or make a contract with them to talk about and create content about the brand or product for a compensation, it is called paid content and marketing. When paying, either compensating or sending products, an influencer to create content, it is usually important that they already like the product or brand they talk about so the content seems natural and authentic. Usually, companies send products or compensations to users who have a high engagement rate or many followers so they can have a high return on their investment and these users are called influencers. (Edelman & Salsber, 2010; Pophal, 2016; Mattke et al., 2019) Influencers can also ask for products that they can then show to their followers, for example on BookTok, influencers can ask or receive new releases of books or special editions with some products relating to the book and then open and review them on a video for their followers.

Effective influencer marketing should aim to build the messages with a strategy called the 4 C's to be concise, credible, compelling, and contagious and to be suitable for the targeted niche. (Pophal, 2016)

Word-of-mouth

Word-of-mouth (WOM) and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) can be defined as feedback and views about products, services, and brands that customers share with each other in the form of talking, likes, comments and reviews (Donthu et al., 2021). WOM is one of the oldest ways of sharing information and it has been considered a very influential way of marketing (Huete-Alcocer, 2017). Electronic WOM has its advantages since it is faster and can reach large groups of people around the world who are potential customers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011). EWOM also allows companies to measure and monitor the factors that motivate the consumers sharing their opinions (Huete-Alcocer, 2017). Donthu et al. (2021) implicate in their research that eWOM can be both positive and negative, thus managing the

negative eWOM defensively is crucial since it travels faster than positive eWOM and can cause damage to the brand image.

Viral marketing is frequently connected with WOM and eWOM. Kaplan & Haenlein (2011) define viral marketing as eWOM within which some message related to a brand or product is growing exponentially through some social media platform. The message needs to be memorable and interesting and to maintain the gained momentum, companies need the more traditional forms of marketing and communications. Similarly, as the influencer marketing, viral marketing campaigns are better when they are not managed too closely since it can affect the content and make it seem inauthentic or too planned.

2.3 TikTok

TikTok is a Chinese social media app owned by a tech company ByteDance. In 2018, after the acquisition of Musical.ly app, it quickly became popular. Despite some restrictions due to the distrust between countries and China, the app has reached three billion downloads worldwide. Especially during COVID-19, the growth of users was extreme, almost 180%, and TikTok was the most downloaded app in 2021. In September 2021 the app reached one billion active users and is most successful among young generations. (Ceci, 2022; Shepherd, 2022; Shutsko, 2020)

People enjoy following entertaining content and influencers as well as users creating content using videos and photos, music, and emotions, rather than only using text. That is why Instagram and TikTok have gained a great number of users on their platforms, and their future is seeming very appealing. (Haenlein et al., 2020) TikTok differentiates itself from other social media platforms by using short, 15 seconds to three minutes, and creative videos where sound or music is extremely important, and they are for the most part user-generated content (Cuesta-Valiño, Gutiérrez-Rodríguez & Durán-Àlamo, 2022). The app quickly became popular internationally and its essence is creating video trends that usually change quickly during days or weeks. Users can search videos by hashtags and key words, see their "Following" feed or watch the "For you" page, which works by the AI algorithm, and scroll an endless supply of user-generated short videos. (Haenlein et al., 2020; Shutsko, 2020)

In TikTok, the content is authentic, genuine, and humorous whereas in other platforms such as Instagram, the content pursues perfection and unrealistic view of life, and that may be one factor within TikTok's success and popularity amongst generation Z since users are interested in honesty and authenticity. (Jerasa & Boffone, 2021; Haenlein et al., 2020) Even though, the content used to be mostly created by general users at first, influencers and companies have realized the potential TikTok has because of the vast userbase. UGC and influencers may seem similar, however there are some separate nuances within the terms since influencers are creating and sharing sponsored, content, usually restricted with a budget, and they are paid for the information they share whereas user-generated content by general users is usually not paid for and created by single users for entertainment. Influencers can also create earned content from which they do not get money from since the engagement is earned, similar to general users creating content. (Müller & Christandl, 2019; Cuesta-Valiño, Gutiérrez-Rodríguez & Durán-Àlamo, 2022) Engagement with influencers was greatest with micro influencers who have less than 15 000 followers, but overall engagement rate was high which indicates that companies should concern themselves with the potential customers in TikTok (Shepherd, 2022). It is also important to examine the influencers based on their engagement rather than only the number of followers (Geyser, 2020).

2.3.1 BookTok

As stated within the introduction chapter, TikTok has many niche subcultures and BookTok is one of them. A community for readers where books and authors are recommended and reviewed, characters discussed, and emotions displayed (Jerasa & Boffone, 2021). The #booktok tag has already been seen by 81 billion users in October 2022. The annual print volume of books has increased over 19% since 2019, which is the highest score since 2004, and BookTok has helped sell over 20 million books in 2021 (Feger, 2022). Prior to BookTok starting to trend and influence the bestseller lists as well as the bookstores there was a -18% decline in reading, however subsequent to the rise of this TikTok community and its attention on various books there has been a 75% increase on certain books elevated on BookTok (Kramer Bussel, 2021).

Instagram and YouTube also have their own book communities, but BookTok differentiates from them by its viral quality (Delemos, 2021). The books that receive attention in BookTok

tend to be YA and NA fiction print books, romance and fantasy being one of the most popular genres, and once they attract audience and become viral, they tend to trend for months. Marketing books recently requires creativity and emotions expressed through sound and videos within social media which engages the readers. Any user can create a viral video since the community works mostly on hashtags and emotions. Influencers are not necessarily the only content creators succeeding since user-generated content can be as engaging and trending in BookTok. (Jensen, 2022; McIlroy, 2022) Paid content and sponsorship tends to disappear in BookTok and it undermines the authentic and honest element within BookTok which is the succeeding factor. WOM and organic engagement between users perform better and builds trust which is the foundation of BookTok's success. (Stewart, 2022) Users feel connected to the content they watch and engage with it, not just passively scrolling past it because the content is genuine and vulnerable (Apple, 2021).

BookTok community is allowing young users and readers to express their emotions freely and communicate and create without boundaries or judgment. It can teach valuable comprehending and summarizing skills as well as allow self-contemplation, insights and comprehension of literacy and identity. In a reader community where diverse opinions and preferences are displayed, individual can find cohesion and feel a sense of togetherness. BookTok encourages creativity and messaging cultural topics. It can present new authors and books to users and change the book marketing as well as bestseller lists at the same time. The danger of a homogenous audience can be that the trending authors and books are one-sided and dominate the market for a long time. (Jerasa & Boffone, 2021; Merga, 2021)

2.3.2 Marketing in TikTok

The content in TikTok circles around short videos and their compelling music and sounds. The large userbase and many niche subcultures differentiates the app from other social media platforms and there is little need for searching a target audience since the algorithm, trends and hashtags guide users to the content that interests them. The videos on TikTok are short enough to keep the users interested, the subcultures and communities are easy to find with the hashtags and algorithm, the content is not too polished or judging but it is authentic and genuine, funny, and relatable. TikTok combines the best features of the popular social media

platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube and attracts users, especially young audience. (Delemos, 2021; Shutsko, 2020; Jerasa & Boffone, 2021)

Companies can use content marketing, owned media, as a marketing tool where the company creates and shares informative as well as interesting content on a social media platform. The key to content marketing is to focus on the needs and interests of customers rather than just trying to sell their products and services. That may explain why social media marketing can be challenging for companies when people use social media to communicate and relax whereas companies use it to promote and sell their products. Communication and relationship to customers on social media can have a positive influence on brand image and customers' attitudes toward the brand since it engages audience and can make the company seem more approachable. (Müller & Christandl, 2019; Zhu & Chen, 2015)

One form of content that has recently become popular and current on social media platforms, like YouTube and TikTok as well as Instagram, is user-generated content (UGC). UGC refers to content, videos, blog texts, reviews, and posts, in social media created by the common users and people as well as influencers creating earned or paid content rather than professionals, or companies trying to sell their products, and UGC is usually tightly connected with electronic word-of-mouth. It is essential for companies to understand the users' attitudes and reasons for creating UGC, therefore why its consumption is increasing. The videos and content on TikTok are still quite dominatingly generated by general users even though influencers are creating their own content and companies have started to bring their content on the platform as well. (Daugherty, Eastin & Bright, 2019; Cuesta-Valiño, Gutiérrez-Rodríguez & Durán-Àlamo, 2022).

Berger & Milkman (2013) conclude within their research that content based on emotions, like anger or awe, used surprisingly or practically can cause the content to go viral and create buzz. Usually, content that contains emotions and amuses the audience is more often shared and therefore, has a chance of going viral. It is critical to marketers to understand the audience's motivation to share information to be able to create such content themselves, therefore possibly gaining potential customers because of the awareness created with the viral information. (Donthu et al., 2021) Positive emotions conquer negative emotions in content perception, however, not all user-generated content is evaluative in nature (Berger & Milkman 2013, Müller & Christandl, 2019). Shepherd (2022) presents statistics that emotional ads had the best performance in TikTok. Merga (2021) found in their study about

BookTok that emotional reader response was one of the most recurring themes in BookTok content and it made videos popular among users since it engages and provides a possibility of escapism, pleasure, or personal insights.

The potential for marketing on TikTok is high and companies should consider investing in it in the form of UGC, influencers, smaller or larger, or creating some content themselves. The factors why businesses and paid influencers are not yet more engaged with this platform will be discussed later in the study along with how it could benefit them utilizing the opportunity.

2.4 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework outlines and defines the perspective of the research and topic. Within this research the theoretical framework builds on the concepts investigated within the literature review and focuses on social media marketing, influencers, and TikTok. The framework is presented in figure 1 and the main points were investigated further within this literature review section.

The aim of this research is to improve the understanding of how book related content and influencer marketing on TikTok affect the marketing strategies of booksellers and book marketers. This literature review examined what is already known about influencer marketing as well as social media marketing and determined whether there are any research gaps. Social media marketing has a long history, and it can be extremely useful when done correctly. It is crucial to choose the correct platform and customer segment to focus to and therefore improve brand image, loyalty, and customer relationships. Influencer marketing is tightly connected with social media marketing, and it has been proved to be a functioning way to influence the potential customers. Influencers can be divided into earned and paid categories which are connecting word-of-mouth and sponsored post in social media. Electronic WOM is leading the information flow on TikTok where people enjoy following influencers and users creating content expressing their opinions and emotions through user-generated content since earned attention and virality seem to succeed better than paid sponsorships on that platform. One of the subcultures BookTok is also benefitting from these authentic and genuine videos promoting certain books and authors and businesses have started to notice the potential of this. The marketing strategies adapted to TikTok must be

well thought and carefully executed to achieve the preferred outcome. All the topics interact with each other and present an interesting framework to be investigated to understand the factors affecting the marketing strategies of booksellers and book marketers, bookshops, and libraries.
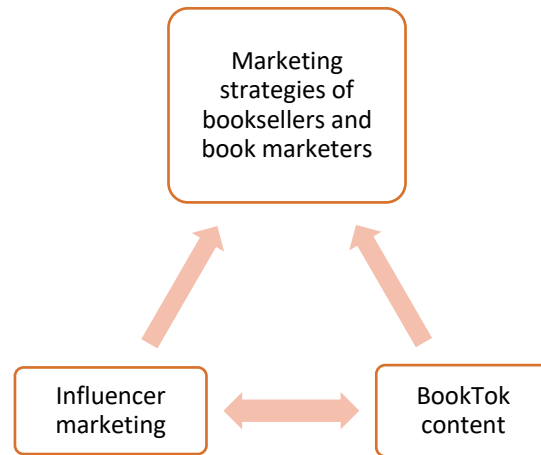
Figure 1. Theoretical framework

3 Research methods

The objective of this research was to examine what role does book content created by influencers on TikTok have on the marketing strategies of booksellers and book marketers as well as the selling of young adult (YA, 12-18) and new adult (NA, 18-30) books. The aim is also to gain more information about how the booksellers and -marketers could benefit from influencer marketing on TikTok. These goals represent an open question that aspires to add understanding and knowledge of the process and topic. Therefore, this research was conducted using qualitative research methods in place of quantitative methods and they will be discussed within detail below. Insight regarding the research methods, collection of data as well as the qualitative content analysis of the data is presented in this chapter as it concentrates on the empirical part of the study.

3.1 Data collection

Qualitative research pursues to understand the studied phenomenon from the subject's point of view and is interested in individuals' thoughts, experiences, and their meanings. It does not aspire to find one right solution or truth about the subjects or topics, rather examine the factors affecting the process and observe the topic as well as the outcome. It is also typical to constantly search for new aspects and perspectives throughout the research. (Puusa et al., 2020) Quantitative studies intend to be generalized and predictable whereas qualitative studies pursue interpretation and contextualization (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2015). Therefore, it is appropriate to use qualitative methods to investigate the role of content affecting marketing strategies and the factors influencing the topic.

Interviews are one of the most used data collection methods in qualitative research, however data can be collected also by using observation or surveys and questionnaires. Interviews are quite flexible, and they provide possibilities to receive information linguistically and through context as well as through non-verbal clues in a more relaxed situation. The goal is to gain detailed answers and deeper the understanding through an actual conversation where the questions can be modified or there can be additional questions added depending on the interviewee and the situation. There is a variety of interviews such as personal interviews,

held one-on-one or focus groups, which allows collecting information from many interviewees at the same time and the interviews can be unstructured, structured, or semi-structured. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2015; Puusa et al., 2020)

Semi-structured interviews are a verbal exchange between two people, the interviewer, and the interviewee. The information is gathered with the help of predetermined questions which usually have an open response which allows interviewees to answer in their own words. The style of these interviews is conversational, and the theme is the same in all interviews. (Longhurst, 2003)

Both primary data and previous research was used conducting this study. Literature review was completed to assist using previous studies and theories. The primary data was collected by using three semi-structured interviews. The interview questions help to structure the interview and guide the conversation and they can be found in appendix 1. The questions were translated to Finnish since the interviewees were all Finnish. The interviews were recorded on a phone and transcribed later to assist with the data analysis. The transcriptions were analyzed in Finnish to alleviate the process of the analysis and to minimize the corruption of the data. The themes in the interviews were BookTok, influencers, book content on TikTok and its possible influence on marketing strategies, and the questions were modified to answer these specific themes.

The semi-structured interviews gathered information about the booksellers, libraries who market their books and the businesses who follow book trends or use influencer marketing to promote their products and gain knowledge, and about their marketing strategies. The interviews provided insight into the strategies and how they may have altered after the rise of the BookTok phenomenon. The invites to interviews were presented to many bookseller representatives, bookshops, libraries, and publishers to gather diverse interviewees and comprehensive information.

Sampling method in qualitative studies is usually selected based on the topic and methodology. Sampling methods are, for example, convenience, theoretical, selective and snowball sampling and the most used in content analysis is purposive or judgmental sampling. In purposive sampling the researcher chooses the best informants based on the assumed knowledge and decides how many people or sites are sampled and about what topic. This may sometimes cause untrustworthiness since the full details of the process are hard to

present and the selection are based only on the researcher's decisions. Snowball sampling works through networks when contact with few people will direct the researcher to another individual who has useful knowledge about the topic. There is no strict guide for the correct sample size, therefore it varies depending on the study and the topic. (Etikan & Bala, 2017; Elo et al., 2014; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008)

Purposive sampling and snowball sampling were both used in this study when selecting interviewees. The appropriate informants were thought to have knowledge about relevant books, TikTok and BookTok as well as their company's marketing strategy and known, relevant businesses were contacted via email and phone with these qualifications in mind. In some cases, the contact within the company directed the researcher to contact another individual with better knowledge, who then became a participant in the interview.

3.2 Data analysis

The primary data of this research was gathered with the help of these three semi-structured interviews, and they were held in Finnish, during one week in November 2022. One person working as a product manager in a Finnish bookseller business and two others working as librarians in Finnish libraries were interviewed, as can be seen in table 2. These interviewees were selected since it was assumed they have some knowledge of the topic because of their work, they can elaborate the customs of their employer and if and how the company is taking influencers and BookTok into consideration. They also had time to participate to the interview in the given timeline and were the ones who agreed to answer questions from the many asked individuals. People were invited to interviews from several different brands and companies, Finnish and international, and from different assignments within the companies. Some people answered that they cannot participate to the interview since they had a feeling, they have too little knowledge of BookTok or trending books to contribute any insightful information or since their company was not yet active on social media and TikTok.

The interviews were all conducted online using Microsoft Teams and the interviews were recorded and conducted anonymously if it was consented by the interviewee which happened in all three cases. The online method allowed interviewees to attend regardless of where they lived or worked and the time for the interview was easier to arrange. The interviews were scheduled for 30-60 minutes; however, the duration could be altered either way depending

on the interviewee. The first interview lasted for 32 minutes, the second for 28 minutes and the third interview lasted for 37 minutes as shown in table 2. At the beginning of all the interviews the research topic was presented briefly as well as the aim of the research. The GDPR form was reviewed and accepted orally and the approval for the recording was also given before starting the conversation and questions.

Table 2. List of interviews

Interviewee	Occupation	Interview duration
1	product manager	32 min
2	librarian	28 min
3	librarian	37 min

The data collected from the interviews is analysed using qualitative content analysis. It is commonly used when analysing qualitative data and it can be used in deductive or inductive way depending on the former knowledge of the phenomenon. Qualitative content analysis represents systematic and representative means of understanding and describing phenomenon and the process has three phases: preparation, organization, and reporting of results. Content analysis allows to analyse certain relationships and meanings of clusters of words and concepts. It is flexible and there are no simple guidelines to using it so it may also be challenging for the researcher to use. The material can be books, texts interviews etc., however interviews are usually analysed after they are written and transcribed. Pieces of information are categorized and connect insights while keeping the research question in mind. The material from the interviews within this research is analysed inductively with qualitative content analysis while referring and connecting the findings to the theoretical framework and relevant literature aiming to understand the underlying meanings and patterns. (Elo et al., 2014; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) In this research the interview transcripts were reviewed many times while collecting and highlighting repeated key words and patterns. These collected parts were then "coded" to different categories which the researcher analysed and formed into themes. Furthermore, the themes were constructed with previous studies in mind as well as reviewing theoretical framework. Some categories stood out, such as influencers, and some were specified and named by the researcher, such as procurement.

4 Research findings

In this chapter the empirical findings are presented, and the information gathered from the interviews is categorized and analysed. The theoretical framework and literature review are followed and kept in mind while examining the information with qualitative content analysis.

The interviewees were first asked on influencer marketing and whether they have seen any changes in marketing and selling books over the last few years and whether the company they work for uses influencers or content creators in their marketing. Subsequent to the broad topics, the questions focused on BookTok, content and its possible benefits, various trending genres and authors, collecting data and opportunities and threats of the phenomenon. Lastly, all the interviewees were asked whether anything important occurred to them considering the topic and how the rise of BookTok is appearing in their work.

A few various themes emerged in the analysis, they will be examined individually starting with BookTok and social media in general, specifying with influencers and concluding with the investigation of marketing strategies. Some quotes from the interviews, translated from Finnish to English, are also presented to increase reliability and indicating original ideas.

Social media

The first category analysed from the emerged themes was social media and the questions in the interviews focused especially on TikTok since it is the topic of this research. The participant from bookshop also mentioned Instagram, Facebook, and Pinterest as social media platforms the company uses when marketing. One library had a TikTok account, and the other library used Facebook and Instagram. The reasons why social media is used can also be found from previous studies, since it allows companies to communicate, create and share content, and engage with users (Peters et al., 2013), which helps achieve desirable outcomes by understanding the need of customers (Li, Larimo and Leonidou, 2020). When a new platform emerges, it usually takes a while for companies and people to familiarize themselves with it and learn its benefits.

"Maybe over the last five years social media and digital marketing have become a considerable way of marketing…traditionally Facebook and Instagram, sometimes Pinterest but now of course TikTok has joined quite forcefully." -Interviewee 1

"We had a TikTok education for libraries recently, about how TikTok works and what could be done there. TikTok would be very good to have since young people are all there."
– Interviewee 3

TikTok was used by two of the businesses where participants worked at as a marketing platform where the company created content themselves. One participant had recently received education about TikTok and how it could be benefitted from considering libraries, in a form of a workshop, which was experienced to be very beneficial, however, the current limited worktime removes the opportunity to maintain a TikTok account and creating content. The success of TikTok happened quite quickly, therefore it may have taken businesses by surprise how popular it became leaving them to wonder how it could be used and how users should be approached on TikTok.

Social media has become an essential part of book marketing in last few years, and it provides awareness of the brand and company as well as presents a useful place for young people to find inspiration with a low effort. It is useful for companies to reflect their strategies before entering a new platform and to choose the platform that suits their goals best ((Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Haenlein et al., 2020; Zhu & Chen, 2015).) since inauthentic content from companies may be one reason why there have been less companies on TikTok and more user-generated and influencer-generated content.

BookTok

The next theme found was BookTok, and as a subculture in TikTok it is essential to this research since it is the community that focuses on books. All the participants found the phenomenon of BookTok extremely positive and beneficial for booksellers and -marketers

as well as consumers and readers since the community reaches young people and increases awareness of books, authors and the companies involved with them.

"I see this BookTok -phenomenon purely as a positive thing because it shows people are still interested in books and reading." – Interviewee 1

The BookTok community can inspire people to read and find books and genres that interest them. It can also teach them critical skills and increase literacy, whether people read romance, classical literature, cartoons, or manual instructions for cars. The popular trending genres on BookTok, fantasy and romance as YA and NA fiction, mentioned in previous studies in the literature review (Jensen, 2022; Mcllroy, 2022), are supported by the information from the conducted interviews, however the participants had also noticed the success of crime and murder mystery genres.

"It is valuable that you learn to go to bookshops or libraries. In today's society it is crucial to have good literacy and it can only be improved by reading." – Interviewee 1

The homogenous community, influencers, and users, consisting mostly of young females was the only criticized matter among participants, as had been found also in previous studies since it can lead to similar authors and titles dominating the content on BookTok (Jerasa & Boffone, 2021; Merga, 2021), it can also lead to excluding certain audiences, such as, young males or others since there are less diverse and varied content about books. However, it can also form other niche cultures and communities that are BookTok's subcultures, where minorities and other groups of people are represented, and more diverse books and authors are recommended.

"Something to criticize is that the users on BookTok are usually young females, there could be more variety in the trending books if the influencers were a bit more varied group." – Interviewee 2

Another matter regarding Finnish booksellers and book marketers that emerged in the interviews was how the content and succeeding titles and trending books are mostly written in English. Many people have started to read in English, and it has been noticed in the companies operating with books, however many younger people are eagerly waiting for the translated books if they wish to read in Finnish. The participants also noted that popular trends usually tend to arrive in Finland later than trending internationally. Previous studies have implicated that TikTok, its popularity and book communities in there are not disappearing anytime soon (Jerasa & Boffone, 2021; Haenlein et al., 2020), therefore, it would be beneficial for Finnish companies also to prepare for the trend when it arrives and study their possibilities if deciding to join the platform.

"BookTok is currently filled with English literature and the trends come to Finland at least half a year later and they may change during that time." – Interviewee 1

Content

The companies where the participants work create their own content on social media, such as on Instagram or Facebook, and two of the three participants' workplaces also create content on TikTok. The content on all social media platforms from the libraries focuses on book recommendations to various genres, the ordinary days and functions of libraries and announcements as well as information. The bookshop's content also includes various book recommendations and informational videos as well as posts promoting other products the company provides. The feedback from customers and users has been positive and the content is usually received well making the company seem more approachable and building relationships with customers.

"We have had a lot of positive feedback on our content on TikTok regarding trending books and customers have been pleased that we can offer the same books in the stores."
- Interviewee 1

The two businesses creating their own content on TikTok have implemented content marketing, also called owned media, in their marketing strategy. The key for them is to keep the content interesting and not pushing the products and services to users too eagerly (Müller & Christandl, 2019). All the TikTok content from one library was perceived positively, however, the funny and emotional videos were more popular than plain videos of, for example, showing the available books or recommending books for a certain season. The literature review supports this idea where emotional videos tend to succeed better since they seem authentic and entertain the viewers (Merga, 2021).

"Sometimes it feels very pointless to do TikTok -videos but then someone asks about them and the books there, and it feels very nice that they are at least helping someone."
- Interviewee 2

Influencers

One of the participants' workplaces, the bookshop, has some collaboration with influencers, however, the two libraries do not use any content creators or influencers. Furthermore, the business using influencers rarely contacts and finds the influencers themselves, rather they collaborate with publishers and form kind of a triangle where the publisher connects with influencers and chooses the most suitable content creators whereas the bookstore has an agreement with the publisher, therefore they can use the material from the influencers.

"Publishers use more influencers and that way the marketing can be seen within our company… we can share the material and content from the influencer. They (publishers) know better what the best approach and most appropriate influencer is." – Interviewee 1

The two other interviewees were intrigued by the idea of using influencer marketing as a marketing strategy and were interested in learning more about it. The main reasons why influencers are not highly utilised yet, but content is created by companies themselves, is the

lack of knowledge about influencer marketing, absence of suitable influencers and the need for money. The libraries would probably need someone local who would be familiar with the concerned library or someone excessively famous, thus they could spread awareness of said library to potential consumers. Additionally, libraries do not pursue profit, even though they are businesses, and would need project funding to be able to pay for an influencer and their content.

"If we would do that, the influencer should probably be local or know the area since we are not a big library." – Interviewee 2

"We should have a project so we could have project finance e.g., for a year to pay the influencer and there should be some proof that the influencer can make good videos… someone well-known or a celebrity would be the best." – Interviewee 3

Influencers can share their opinions and thought organically and earn attention from users or businesses can compensate them to talk about the brand or products (Myhrman, 2019). Therefore, libraries and bookshops can also gain attention from influencers organically if an influencer visits the location and wants to share their thoughts about it. However, it is not likely if the library is relatively small, thus they would need to pay the influencer to promote them. Earned influence demands something that makes people talk, such as, a beautiful location, an awesome or weird product or amazing customer service.

Companies and, for example, publishers can, and already do, also send products, such as books, to influencers and users to try and review on video or post instead of just compensating them with money (Edelman & Salsber, 2010; Pophal, 2016; Mattke et al., 2019), however it is not known if the influencers in Finland review the pieces they receive from publishers on social media publicly for users or just for the publishers.

Marketing and selling of books

One theme appeared in the analysis of interviews was procurement of books and knowledge of which are trending and popular ones. BookTok occurred to be quite useful when judging the popularity of books, however, all the participants' workplaces still attempted to market various books, authors, and genres. Libraries do not need to follow the trends as closely as bookstores since they procure almost everything they are offered from various large publishers, nevertheless it is still useful to know what people are reading and which books need to be ordered more.

"We procure basically everything the publishers offer us." – Interviewee 3

Libraries follow data from their most loaned books as well as most reserved books, therefore, knowing which books are demanded the most. The bookstore has sales data as a source of which books and titles are selling and trending among their customers. The bookstores' personnel can also register wishes from customers to a certain system for the supply management to examine and procure the books if necessary.

"The trends from BookTok are one way to learn about the books people want to buy, what is interesting and what should be procured more." – Interviewee 1

The trending titles and genres are presented differently in certain stores and libraries depending on the desires of the personnel working at the location. The company selling and marketing books has separate sections for BookTok books in some stores, especially in bigger cities, and it can be called, for example, "TikTok made me buy it" -section in the physical stores. There is also the same section in the online store. These sections of TikTok books can still be divided into various genres, such as fantasy, romance, or fiction. The books presented in the online store section are changing constantly depending on what people buy, and the shelfs in the physical stores can be styled how the personnel in the store wish it to

look like and the marketing division has constructed various materials for them to use to represent the BookTok -shelf.

" There is a separate section in the online store 'TikTok made me buy it' and it changes according to what people buy or search for, we have algorithms to do it." – Interviewee 1

The libraries have thought about making exhibitions about BookTok books and one participant had assembled some, however the popular books are usually always loaned and not on the shelf, therefore it is quite useless to build sections that would be empty all the time. The online libraries do not include separate sections for popular books from TikTok, although they consist of pages recommending the visitors the most loaned or reserved books and some new releases by genre. These various sections in libraries and bookstores make it easier for the customer to find the specific product they look for or find inspiration in certain genre.

"It is not reasonable to make separate 'Trending shelfs' because the trending books are always loaned, but the online library has the most loaned and most reserved books shown." – Interviewee 3

The participants were asked whether they had noticed any changes in the customer behaviour of consumers, especially young people, over the last years. The answers were all unanimous regarding how people have started to read more and consume books in English. Similar authors and titles being popular was also mentioned in all interviews as well as the use of apps, such as TikTok and Goodreads, where users can review books, they have read and read others' favorite books and their thoughts about them. This electronical word-of-mouth can cause certain genres, books or authors go viral and trending since users share their opinions about them publicly. Booksellers and -marketers could also benefit from eWOM as consumers could raise awareness and build trustworthiness about businesses and brands. (Donthu et al., 2021)

There was one insight regarding how people tend to usually buy the books they see on BookTok, which can cause division between people since everyone cannot buy the books, that is one reason why libraries feel responsible to follow some trends in order that they can provide those certain books to the readers for free.

"Young people are very independent when searching for books." – Interviewee 2

"Young people have started to read a lot more books in English and there is demand on quite the same books and authors, such as Colleen Hoover." – Interviewee 3

5 Discussion and conclusions

In this section, the empirical findings are discussed, and the research is concluded with connecting the theoretical framework and results as well as providing the answers to the research question presented at the beginning of the study. The focus will be on the research findings and literature review. Lastly, the reliability of this research is reviewed as well as the possibilities of future studies are discussed.

5.1 Discussion

This study was conducted to discover the role of book content on TikTok, created and shared by influencers, has on the selling and marketing of books as well as how companies could benefit from influencer marketing on TikTok. The interviews focused on bookshops and libraries marketing their products and services.

Many social media platforms have established as marketing tools and TikTok is the latest arrival, especially popular among young generations. The authentic and emotional content on TikTok tends to go viral and create trends, spreading information globally (Merga, 2021). Therefore, it shows great potential for businesses to create awareness and trustworthiness since the succession of this social media platform builds around electronic word-of-mouth,

people recommending and talking about brands and products on their videos (Donthu et al., 2021). Many companies have started to create content themselves, however, fewer businesses have realized the potential of influencer marketing and the use of content creators to reach the users.

Book marketing has evolved over the years as well and the newest trend in the book communities is BookTok, the subculture of TikTok where users review and recommend books and authors. BookTok has high potential to revolutionize book marketing, if it has not yet done that, and businesses should use the opportunity to join the trend. The use of influencers and UGC should be examined and possibilities to reach customers investigated to stay relevant as a business managing books. Furthermore, businesses could gather more data regarding their use of social media and improve their reach, examining how useful influencers could be opposing only creating content themselves.

5.2 Conclusions

This chapter provides answers, supported by the literature, to the research questions that were presented at the beginning of this research report. First the first research question RQ1 determining the role of book content on TikTok regarding marketing and selling of books.

> *RQ1: What kind of role does book content on TikTok have on the selling and marketing of young adult and new adult books?*

This study found that BookTok and book content have affected the reading habits of people increasingly and it shows in Finnish bookstores and libraries. The trending books among young people also tend to be mostly in English and it has changed the selections procured and available on bookstores and libraries. Physical and online stores/libraries may have their own sections for TikTok books and marketing departments produce various materials to inform customers about the assortment and products known from TikTok.

Already, many businesses related with books create content on TikTok and almost every business selling and/or marketing books uses social media platforms, e.g., Instagram and

Facebooks to reach customers and share information, however, TikTok has not yet been utilized by many companies. Social media content and pages were also used already prior to the rise of BookTok, thus it may have not influenced the use of social media marketing as much. However, the use of TikTok as a potential social media marketing platform for booksellers may have been influenced from the success of BookTok and it may be seen as an interesting platform now.

The marketing of bestselling and trending books seems to have become easier since young people are independent when it comes to finding interesting books and authors, however, the marketing of various other books that do not have the same attention on BookTok can also be marketed on the company's own social media pages and TikTok, shared to the potential customers. The co-operation between publishers and bookstores as well as libraries, in Finland and internationally, has evolved and they share information to each other regarding popular titles and genres, which can ease the procurement of books. However, bookstores and libraries tend not to co-operate since bookstores sell their products and libraries lend them for free, which causes a minor contradiction which can then divide readers and customers.

The role of book content on TikTok has inspired people to read and offers them a wider selection to choose from, furthermore improving the situation of booksellers and book marketers (Merga, 2021; Jerasa & Boffone, 2021). It can favour certain authors or genres since the userbase is currently more females, however it improves the literary skills of people. The transition to TikTok and the substantial use of social media marketing may cause businesses a need for education and recruitment for new employees to maintain social media accounts. Altogether, the BookTok phenomenon has the potential to change the course of people's reading habits and oppose the highly reported trend of decreasing literacy.

Next the RQ2 will be answered. The second research question focuses on the possible benefits of influencer marketing concerning books.

RQ2: How could booksellers and book marketers benefit from the influencer marketing on TikTok concerning YA and NA books?

Only one business in this study used some influencer marketing, as their publisher had connections to influencers, and others had not even thought about the possibility of it. The main reasons were the lack of funding and knowledge about influencer marketing as well as the need for specific qualities concerning the influencer.

The use of influencer marketing could benefit the businesses in various ways since the influencers are directly connected to the users on social media platforms and they are seen as more trustworthy and authentic (Lou & Yuan, 2019) than only businesses creating content. Influencers can create trends and buzz around certain topics and create awareness when talking about products or brands, therefore, using influencers in marketing books can inspire and excite people to read and talk about books. They can add knowledge about the product and services of the business, bookstore, or library, antiquarian or retailer, or share positive opinions regarding certain brands, physical or online stores. (Donthu et al., 2021)

Influencers can share information and opinions since they extremely like some product or brand, gaining earned attention, or since they are paid to talk about it. If businesses want earned attention and buzz on TikTok or another platform without paying for it, they must literally earn it with great products, customer service or beautiful locations that make people talk. (Myhrman, 2021) That may cause eWOM between users, influencers, or other businesses. User-generated and influencer-generated content succeed well when the reactions are authentic and contain emotions, therefore too managed or forced content may cause negative attention (Berger & Milkman, 2013). Businesses are also able to gain attention by paying influencers, which is usually by compensation or free products. However, the influencer does not necessarily have to be the most famous and with millions of followers since sometimes the best engagement is with micro influencers (Shepherd, 2022) and they could be reached more easily and economically.

The most noteworthy theoretical implications in this research are the companies' lack of knowledge about influencer marketing and the positive impact that the content in BookTok has on book marketers and readers. Companies would possibly benefit greatly from influencers and are excited about the opportunity, however, they lack information about how it could be implemented and how it would suit their goals best. The content on BookTok has inspired people to start reading, which improves their literacy and the situation of bookstores and libraries since people consume books.

5.3 Managerial implications

In this section, practical managerial suggestions are given for companies to use when marketing books and using or thinking about the potential of TikTok and influencers. Influencer marketing should be implemented in the marketing strategies of companies when suitable since it can build relationships with customers and create awareness to various matters. Their content is seen as authentic (Berger & Milkman 2013) and if the companies wish for organic attention, they should consider their selection and invest in good products as well as use data to map what their potential customers appreciate and would like to share in their social media pages.

Educating the staff and perhaps hiring an employee to maintain the social media pages, e.g., TikTok, could be a great investment and should be considered when trying to reach customers and booklovers on social media. Some of the own content brands create on TikTok should be emotional and entertaining to engage users and gain attention, possibly even virality since it succeeds well on TikTok (Merga, 2021).

The increasing interest to reading and its possible positive effects on people's literacy and skills may cause booksellers and book marketers to converse with customers more, procuring and recommending them suitable books and gathering data about the consumed literature. The need for various genres and levels of reading needs actions from companies to answer the changing needs of readers.

Lastly, familiarizing themselves with BookTok and influencer marketing is vital to appear appealing to people on social media, TikTok especially, when marketing books. Utilizing and knowing about BookTok can assist in procurement, conversations with customers and creating engaging content or making appealing products or locations. Being familiar with influencer marketing, however, could gain the company competitive advantage or high awareness as well as making the business appear more approachable by consumers.

5.4 Reliability and future research

For this study, some unreliability could be found in the interviewees since the two librarians who participated in this research were working in relatively small libraries which could have

affected the answers and they might not represent all libraries. The participants were, however, providing various views since they worked in different assignments and the interviews were held separately, which increases reliability regarding the gathered information. The research has also been reported strictly and someone could execute this study again. (Puusa, 2020) The interviews were, however, all held in Finnish, and the quotes were then translated to English, thus it could have changed some nuances. The semi-structured interviews can also impact the questions and answers in the interviews, leaving out some key points. Qualitative content analysis does not have many guidelines; thus, the analysis is quite dependent on the researcher and that may affect the findings. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2015) All the interviewees were familiar with the terms used in this study and relevant information was provided and explained at the beginning of the interviews which increases reliability.

Future studies with larger number of participants could provide broader views about the topic and include answers internationally since the BookTok trend is worldwide. The effects of book content could also be studied on different platforms, such as, Instagram or Youtube, however TikTok probably has the most relevant and active book community currently. Research about this topic could also be conducted with quantitative methods, resulting in various results regarding more accurate numbers and specific answers about book communities and their users. Another interesting view to this phenomenon could be from the influencers and users in TikTok, studying how they feel about the trend and what matters they find important considering the subculture. More academic interest and attention, not only general newspaper articles and blog posts, could be targeted towards TikTok and BookTok defining it and presenting relevant findings in the future. Since this study found that people have started to read more and consume various books, it could be a possible research topic to compare the literature skills and how much people read compared to the years before. The homogeneity, inclusivity and variety in bestselling books and authors could also be studied more closely in the future.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Structure of the interview

Influencer marketing

- Have you noticed any change in the selling and marketing of YA and NA books in the last few years? If yes, what changes? examples.

- Do you and *the workplace of the interviewee* collaborate with content creators or influencers? If, has it been successful and how?

- If not, why, have you thought about it and would it be relevant?

- Does *the workplace* create some content to TikTok themselves? What kind/why not?

BookTok

- Are you familiar with the terms BookTok & Bookstagram?

- Have you seen/watched so called book content in TikTok? How does it show in your work?

- How (if at all) does *the workplace of the interviewee* acknowledge these "trending" YA (young adult, 12-18) and NA (new adult, 18-30) books in the physical store/library?

- How (if at all) does *the workplace of the interviewee* acknowledge these "trending" YA (young adult, 12-18) and NA (new adult, 18-30) books in the online store/online library?

Marketing strategy/TikTok marketing

- What do you think of this phenomenon of influencers and users reviewing and recommending books in social media? How is it showing in your work? What are the benefits and are there some challenges considering marketing?

- How can *the workplace* benefit from the book content in TikTok or are you benefitting from it? What kind of benefits? What about in the future? Have there been challenges?

- What kind of books and authors do you think succeed in these social media platform communities?

- How does *the workplace of the interviewee* take this (better succession of some books and authors) into consideration?

- Have you collected any data about the marketing and selling of YA and NA books and what have you learned from it?

- Do you see any threats or downsides /pros and cons?

Additional

- Do you have something to add or is something important to acknowledge in this study?