

The Impact of the BookTok Phenomenon on the Transformation of Generation Z's Reading Habits in the Digital Age in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The rapid rise of BookTok, a book-related community on TikTok, has significantly impacted the reading habits of Generation Z in the digital age. This study examines the influence of the BookTok phenomenon on the reading behavior of Generation Z in Indonesia using a quantitative approach. A total of 120 participants completed a survey designed to assess their engagement with BookTok, reading frequency, genre preferences, and the adoption of digital reading platforms. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 25, employing descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation, and regression analysis. The results show that higher engagement with BookTok is positively correlated with increased reading frequency, diversification of reading genres, and a preference for digital reading formats. The findings suggest that BookTok plays a significant role in shaping the reading habits of Generation Z by encouraging them to read more, explore various genres, and adopt digital reading technologies. These insights have implications for the publishing industry, educational institutions, and libraries in their efforts to engage younger generations with literature in the digital era.

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1. INTRODUCTION

TikTok has significantly influenced cultural trends and individual behaviors, particularly among younger generations. One prominent trend is BookTok, a sub-community that has revitalized interest in reading and reshaped traditional publishing and marketing strategies, especially among Generation Z. This trend has boosted book sales and popularized new genres like "romantasy" [1]. The platform's algorithmic recommendations and user-generated content create an engaging experience, encouraging

book discovery [2]. Publishers and booksellers have responded by featuring BookTok displays and collaborating with influencers [3]. TikTok's short-form video format makes book reviews more appealing to digital natives, while influencer marketing plays a crucial role in shaping consumer preferences (Sriastiti & Mahyuni, 2024). The platform's ability to mediate influencer reviews and brand image significantly impacts book purchases [4]. The success of BookTok demonstrates the broader influence of social

media on consumer behavior, extending beyond books to various industries [5].

The rise of BookTok in Indonesia, particularly among Generation Z, has transformed reading habits by leveraging TikTok's engaging and interactive nature. This shift from traditional reading methods to a more dynamic, community-driven approach highlights the role of digital platforms in shaping literacy behaviors. BookTok has redefined the publishing market by engaging users through short, playful videos and fostering diverse reader identities, such as informed novices, collectors, and aspiring experts [5]. Emotional responses and shared experiences are central to BookTok discussions, creating a welcoming space akin to traditional book clubs that enhance reading engagement.

Additionally, BookTok builds communities where users, often called "fangirls," emphasize emotional connections over critical analysis, mirroring the dynamics of traditional book clubs and offering new engagement opportunities for libraries and educators [5]. However, while BookTok promotes reading, its digital nature can lead to language errors and misunderstandings, affecting communication quality [6]. Moreover, the influence of public figures and content creators on TikTok shapes communication styles and preferences, underscoring the need for critical engagement with content [7]. This trend raises important questions about the sustainability of reading culture in a digitalized society and the potential of social media to reshape literacy behaviors.

The importance of this phenomenon lies not only in its influence on personal reading preferences but also in its broader implications for the publishing industry, libraries, and educational institutions. By leveraging the popularity of BookTok, stakeholders can potentially address declining literacy rates and foster a vibrant reading culture among Indonesian youth. However, this transformation warrants careful examination to understand the extent of BookTok's impact on reading habits, including changes in reading frequency,

genre preferences, and the adoption of digital reading formats. This study aims to explore the impact of the BookTok phenomenon on the reading habits of Generation Z in Indonesia, employing a quantitative analysis approach.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Social Media and Cultural Trends*

Social media platforms, particularly TikTok, have become instrumental in shaping consumer trends by facilitating the exchange of cultural ideas and preferences. TikTok's algorithm-driven content delivery system personalizes user experiences, fostering niche communities like BookTok, where users share and promote their interest in books [8]. This personalization increases engagement and accelerates trend adoption, enabling entertainment, lifestyle, and leisure trends to emerge swiftly through user-generated content and influencer participation [9]. Influencers play a crucial role in curating and endorsing trends, which are then rapidly disseminated across the platform, while user-generated content democratizes trend creation, allowing everyday users to shape cultural and consumer trends [10]. Social media platforms, including TikTok, significantly influence consumer behavior by shaping preferences and driving the adoption of new trends through the interplay between influencers, brands, and consumers [11]. Beyond consumerism, social media has transformed cultural practices by amplifying diverse voices, shaping societal norms, and promoting inclusivity by breaking down traditional barriers (Pande & Asthana, 2024). These dynamics highlight the broader impact of TikTok and similar platforms on modern consumerism and cultural evolution [12].

2.2 *The Emergence of BookTok*

BookTok, a vibrant sub-community on TikTok, has reshaped reading preferences and purchasing behaviors, particularly among

Generation Z. Leveraging TikTok's unique features, it has revived certain book genres and titles, becoming a powerful marketing tool for publishers and authors. BookTok has propelled backlist titles to bestseller status, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, when it became a key platform for book discovery and discussion [6]. The rise of genres like "romantasy" further underscores its influence on literary trends [6]. Influencers like Polish booktoker Emili Jachimczyk have transformed book reviews and recommendations, making literature more engaging for digital audiences [13]. The platform supports diverse content, including reviews, recommendations, and reading challenges, catering to various reader profiles [5]. Additionally, TikTok's algorithmic recommendations and user-generated content drive purchase intentions and brand engagement [14]. The integration of e-commerce within TikTok further streamlines book sales, enhancing its role as an effective tool for publishers and authors [3]

2.3 *Generation Z and Reading Habits*

BookTok, a sub-community on TikTok, has emerged as a powerful tool in shaping Generation Z's reading habits by combining entertainment with educational content. Leveraging Gen Z's digital orientation and social media engagement, BookTok makes reading more appealing and accessible through multimedia content and peer recommendations. This aligns with their preference for digital platforms and peer-influenced decision-making, effectively promoting literacy. As a generation deeply immersed in digital spaces, Gen Z relies on social media platforms, including TikTok, which, while sometimes diverting attention from traditional reading, also fosters online literacy communities [15]. A significant portion of Gen Z engages with literacy content on social media, indicating a positive influence on their reading habits

[16]. BookTok thrives on peer recommendations and community engagement, reinforcing Gen Z's tendency to rely on social validation in decision-making [17]. By fostering a shared interest in books, the platform encourages more young individuals to explore reading as a leisure activity [18]. Additionally, BookTok's use of short, engaging videos aligns with Gen Z's preference for multimedia content and multitasking, making reading more appealing to a generation with reduced attention spans [19]

2.4 *Reading Culture in Indonesia*

Indonesia's struggle to foster a robust reading culture is multifaceted, involving challenges in digital literacy, educational strategies, and access to reading materials. Despite government initiatives such as mobile libraries and digital platforms, reading remains a low-priority activity among Indonesian youth. However, the rise of BookTok offers a promising opportunity to engage Generation Z, significant TikTok users, in reading activities by bridging the gap between digital engagement and literacy improvement. While Indonesia's digital literacy is improving, challenges like misinformation and a lack of digital ethics hinder effective engagement with digital reading platforms [20]. Teachers also face difficulties teaching reading in digital contexts due to limited knowledge of digital learning models and students' struggle to engage with multi-text sources [21]. Various educational strategies, such as shared reading and digital media integration, are being implemented, but low student interest and varying abilities remain obstacles [22]. The establishment of reading parks seeks to cultivate a reading culture from an early age by improving access to reading materials and encouraging community engagement [23]. However, inequality in access to literacy resources and suitable book collections continues to be a barrier, highlighting the need to improve book

accessibility, particularly in rural areas, through collaborations with the private sector [24]

2.5 *Impact of Digital Platforms on Literacy*

Digital platforms have significantly transformed traditional literacy practices by enabling more dynamic and interactive forms of reading and learning, offering flexibility, efficiency, and enhanced engagement. This is evident in the teaching of the Qur'an at the Prophet's Mosque, where digital tools facilitate communication and participation among students from diverse cultural backgrounds [25]. Similarly, digital reading platforms like ReadWorks have been shown to improve reading comprehension skills among high school students, demonstrating the potential of digital tools to enhance learning outcomes [26]. Beyond education, digital literacy initiatives empower marginalized communities by integrating technology into their daily lives, fostering socio-economic development and inclusion despite challenges such as limited resources and resistance to change [27]. Digital platforms also play a crucial role in higher education by accelerating personal development and emphasizing strategic management and flexibility, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic [28]. Systematic reviews recommend implementing digital literacy programs to educate students and faculty on effectively using digital platforms while ensuring online privacy and data protection [29]. These examples illustrate the transformative potential of digital platforms in fostering educational progress, community engagement, and inclusive access to diverse reading experiences.

2.6 *Gaps in the Literature*

While existing studies have explored the influence of BookTok on global reading habits, limited research has focused on its specific impact in Indonesia. Additionally, the extent to which BookTok influences critical

aspects of reading behavior—such as frequency, genre preference, and digital engagement—remains underexplored. This study seeks to address these gaps by providing empirical evidence of the BookTok phenomenon's role in transforming Generation Z's reading habits in Indonesia.

2.7 *Theoretical Framework*

This research draws upon the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which posits that individuals actively seek out media to satisfy specific needs, such as entertainment, information, and social interaction (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). BookTok's appeal can be understood through this lens, as it offers users a platform to discover books, share experiences, and engage with a community of readers. The study also incorporates the Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 2003), which explains how new ideas and behaviors spread within a society. BookTok serves as an innovative medium that has rapidly influenced reading habits through social endorsement and digital connectivity.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 *Research Design*

This study employs a quantitative research design to assess the impact of the BookTok phenomenon on Generation Z's reading habits in Indonesia. The research is structured to measure the influence of BookTok on key aspects of reading behavior, including reading frequency, genre preferences, and the adoption of digital and physical reading formats. A structured questionnaire is used as the primary data collection instrument, employing a Likert scale (1-5) to quantify respondents' perceptions and behaviors regarding BookTok's influence on their reading habits.

3.2 *Population and Sample*

The target population for this study consists of Generation Z individuals in Indonesia who are active users of TikTok and are familiar with the BookTok phenomenon. Generation Z is

defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012. A sample of 120 respondents was selected using a convenience sampling technique. This sample size was determined based on the typical statistical power required for quantitative research with Likert-scale data. The respondents were recruited through online surveys distributed via social media platforms and TikTok itself, ensuring the inclusion of individuals who are active within the BookTok community.

3.3 Sampling Technique

A convenience sampling technique was employed to select participants who meet the criteria of being members of Generation Z and actively engaging with TikTok, specifically in relation to BookTok content. This non-probability sampling method was chosen due to its practical advantages in reaching a target audience that fits the study's specific demographic and behavioral characteristics. While this method may limit the generalizability of the findings, it is appropriate given the research's focus on a specific subculture within Generation Z in Indonesia.

3.4 Data Collection Instrument

The data collection instrument used in this study is a structured questionnaire that was designed to measure the impact of BookTok on reading habits. All items in the questionnaire use a Likert scale with five response options: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), and Strongly Agree (5). The Likert scale is used to quantify subjective responses, providing a clear measure of the strength of participants' attitudes and behaviors regarding BookTok's influence.

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Data collected through the questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS version 25, a statistical software commonly used for social science research. The analysis involved several steps, beginning with descriptive statistics, which provided an overview of participants' demographic characteristics,

including age, gender, and education, as well as key study variables such as reading frequency, genre preferences, and BookTok engagement. Next, a reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's alpha to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire, ensuring that the Likert scale items reliably measured the constructs of interest. Inferential statistics were then applied, including correlation analysis using Pearson's correlation to examine the relationships between BookTok engagement and changes in reading habits. Finally, a multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the extent to which BookTok engagement predicts changes in reading behavior, such as increased reading frequency and genre diversification.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

a. Descriptive Statistics

The sample for this study consisted of 120 Generation Z respondents with diverse demographic characteristics. In terms of gender, 68% identified as female, while 32% identified as male. All participants were aged between 18 and 25, with a mean age of 22 years. Regarding education level, 40% of respondents were university students, 35% had completed their undergraduate degrees, and 25% were enrolled in vocational programs. TikTok usage was prevalent among participants, with 80% reporting daily usage, and 45% spending over three hours per day on the platform.

Regarding reading habits, 50% of participants reported reading at least 2-3 times per week, while 30% read once a week, and only 20% read less frequently. Digital reading was the preferred format for 60% of respondents, who favored e-books and audiobooks, whereas 40% preferred physical books, reflecting Gen Z's digital fluency. In terms of

genre preferences, fantasy was the most popular (40%), followed by romance (35%) and non-fiction (25%), which aligns with the trending content on BookTok.

b. Reliability Analysis

The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha to ensure internal consistency, with an overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.85, indicating good reliability. The individual sections also demonstrated strong

reliability, with Engagement with BookTok showing a Cronbach's alpha of 0.871, Reading Frequency at 0.816, and Genre Preferences at 0.793. These results suggest that the items within each section are highly correlated and effectively measure the intended constructs.

c. Correlation Analysis

The correlation between BookTok engagement and various reading habits was analyzed using Pearson's correlation coefficient.

Table 1. Correlation Coefficient

Variable	Reading Frequency	Genre Preferences	Digital Reading Preference
BookTok Engagement	0.56**	0.47**	0.39**

The results indicate that there is a moderate-to-strong positive correlation between BookTok engagement and reading frequency ($r = 0.56$), genre diversification ($r = 0.47$), and the preference for digital reading formats ($r = 0.39$). This suggests that higher engagement with BookTok is associated with an increase in reading frequency, a broader range of genres, and a preference for digital reading.

d. Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the predictive power of BookTok engagement on changes in reading habits. The results showed that BookTok engagement significantly predicts reading frequency, with an R^2 value of 0.31, meaning that 31% of the variance in reading frequency can be explained by engagement with BookTok ($\beta = 0.56, p < 0.01$). Similarly, BookTok engagement was found to influence genre preferences, explaining 22% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.22, \beta = 0.47, p < 0.01$). Additionally, engagement with BookTok had a notable impact on digital reading preference, accounting for 15% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.15, \beta = 0.39, p < 0.01$).

The regression analysis supports the findings from the correlation analysis, confirming that BookTok engagement significantly predicts reading frequency, genre diversification, and digital reading preferences. These results suggest that the more participants engage with BookTok content, the more likely they are to read more frequently, explore a wider range of genres, and adopt digital reading formats. This highlights the growing influence of social media platforms like TikTok in shaping modern reading habits and preferences.

Three hypotheses were tested in this study:

- H1: Higher engagement with BookTok is positively correlated with increased reading frequency among Generation Z in Indonesia.
- H2: Higher engagement with BookTok is positively correlated with the diversification of genres read by Generation Z.
- H3: Higher engagement with BookTok is positively associated with the adoption of

digital reading platforms by Generation Z.

4.2 Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that BookTok has a significant influence on the reading habits of Generation Z in Indonesia [16]. First, BookTok engagement positively correlates with increased reading frequency. This aligns with existing literature that highlights the potential of social media platforms to promote reading and foster a sense of community around books [30]. The TikTok platform's algorithm and user-generated content, such as book reviews and recommendations, appear to motivate Generation Z to read more frequently.

Second, BookTok engagement also leads to greater genre diversification. Participants in this study reported reading a broader range of genres, including fantasy, romance, and non-fiction, which are commonly featured in BookTok videos [31]. This is consistent with research that suggests social media influences consumer choices by exposing users to new and varied content [32]. BookTok's viral nature allows for the rapid dissemination of popular books across genres, contributing to the diversification of reading preferences.

Finally, the preference for digital reading formats, such as e-books and audiobooks, is positively associated with BookTok engagement [30]. This trend aligns with the digital nature of the BookTok community and reflects a broader shift in reading habits driven by technological advances and the convenience of digital media [3]. As Generation Z increasingly engages with digital content, they are more likely to adopt digital reading platforms as part of their overall reading experience.

4.3 Implications

The findings of this study have several implications for the publishing industry, educational institutions, and library services. Publishers and authors can leverage BookTok as a marketing tool

to reach younger audiences and promote books that align with the interests of Generation Z. Educational institutions could also use BookTok to encourage reading among students by introducing it as a tool for discovering new literature. Finally, libraries could explore digital platforms and integrate them with BookTok to make books more accessible and appealing to younger generations.

4.4 Limitations and Future Research

Despite its valuable contributions, this study has limitations. The use of a convenience sample may limit the generalizability of the results, as participants may already be highly engaged with BookTok, which may not represent the broader population of Generation Z. Additionally, the study is cross-sectional, so it cannot capture long-term trends or changes in reading behavior over time. Future research could address these limitations by employing longitudinal designs and larger, more diverse samples. Additionally, exploring the content type (e.g., reviews, challenges, book discussions) that resonates most with readers could provide more nuanced insights into the mechanisms driving the BookTok phenomenon.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study provides evidence that the BookTok phenomenon significantly influences the reading habits of Generation Z in Indonesia. Through the platform, users are exposed to book recommendations, reviews, and discussions that encourage them to read more frequently, explore a wider range of genres, and adopt digital reading formats. The findings highlight the power of social media in shaping cultural practices, especially among younger generations, and emphasize the role of platforms like TikTok in transforming how books are consumed. This study underscores the importance of understanding digital trends in literature consumption and suggests that publishers, educators, and libraries can harness the power of BookTok to foster a stronger reading culture among Generation Z.

Future research could explore the long-term effects of BookTok on reading habits and its

potential to create lasting changes in the global book market.

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