



TikTok – a Digital Book Club

Under the hashtag #BookTok, young people post book recommendations on [TikTok](#). In doing so, they breathe new life into even long-forgotten books – and in the best case, even ensure a new edition.

I must confess that I completely underestimated the importance of social media. LinkedIn is now firmly anchored in our daily editorial routine, and we are currently expanding our Instagram account. This has enabled us to improve the interlinking of the various online channels and increase the visibility of the printed magazine. I had assumed that two channels would be enough for the time being.

Tip from the 13-year-old daughter

I did register the hype around TikTok, but I was confident that it would pass me by. But far from it, because under the hashtag #BookTok literature recommendations are posted, which can be quite relevant for the sales figures of books. So I asked my 13-year-old daughter to let me in on the TikTok world.

The platform is home to millions upon millions of video clips, no more than 60 seconds long, often accompanied by music and dialogue. Teenagers try to get as many likes as possible with dance moves, fashion tips and cooking recipes. Young readers also use TikTok like a digital book club to share their literary favorites. Now I understand why my daughter has often told me that I'm oldschool.

An accolade among BookTokers

With #BookTok, the focus is not on the content, but rather on the emotion that the book triggers. For example, [@aymansbooks](#) provides an example of this. Ayman Chaudhary holds up the book „The Song of Achill“ to the camera and says with a big smile, „Hey, this is me on the first day I read the book.“ At the end, the young woman is completely broken down, crying and shouting into the microphone, „And that’s how I finish it!“ And she hurls the book into the corner of the room, which is considered an accolade among BookTokers.

Currently, [@aymansbooks](#) is followed by over 223,000 people – and growing every day. The video did not miss its emotional impact. Madeline Miller’s novel was published back in 2012, and now, according to [NPD BookScan](#), it sells ten times as many copies as it did when it was first published, and in March 2021, the „[New York Times](#)“ ranked it #3 on the paperback bestseller list.

Unexpected increases in sales figures

Some of the most famous BookTokers are fed reading material quite specifically by publishers or authors. The influence of literary recommendations on the book market is so great that the American bookstore [Barnes & Noble](#) has set up book tables for current BookTok bestsellers in some branches and maintains a bestseller list on its website. On Instagram, for example, there has been a book-loving community for some time now, which exchanges information about new releases away from the feuilleton.

No other social media platform has yet been able to secure its own sales table. „BookTokers aren’t afraid to talk openly and emotionally about the books, which allows them to connect with the community immediately,“ says Shannon DeVito of Barnes & Noble. In some cases, she says, that leads to unexpected increases in sales.

#BookTok thrives on the platform’s dynamism – anyone and everyone can upload a video, comment on posts, accept challenges. Also in vogue are time-lapse videos showing BookTokers reading or strolling through a library or antiquarian bookshop or capturing the unpacking moment of a book delivery from online retailers. But also the equipment of a book with a refined cover, a colored book card print or special cards for collecting becomes a topic and thus a purchase criterion.

The sales machinery kicks in

BookTokers are mostly female. Their videos are mostly about so-called young-adult books. Titles such as „Eragon“ or „The Tribute to Panem,“ in other words. John Adamo, head of marketing at [Random House Children’s Books](#), told the “New York Times” that the company currently works with about 100 TikTok bloggers. As soon as a title is successful on TikTok, says Adamo, the entire publishing machinery kicks in, with advertising, readings, and everything that goes with it.

The first European publishers are also already present on TikTok, such as [Loewe Verlag](#), which specializes in children’s and youth literature. „Our own creative videos specially designed for TikTok are already part of our strategy,“ says Nicolai Lindner, Head of Online Marketing & PR. London-based publisher [Penguin](#) is also convinced that the app will become increasingly relevant for marketing campaigns. A test campaign in the new-adult sector has shown the potential, he says.

The [Swiss Institute for Child and Youth Media](#) sees the app as a good tool for promoting reading. It says the BookTok community appeals primarily to young people with an affinity for reading and those who want to express themselves with short video clips. „Young people

who have no connection to reading at all can hardly be turned into bookworms via the TikTok platform," says literary promotion expert Aleta-Amirée von Holzen.

Nevertheless, the Internet and social media are the places where you can pick up young people and perhaps win them over to reading. It's certainly not a mistake to give it a try!

Yours

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