

A Publisher's Guide to
Navigating the World of

Digital Book Marketing



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There's an online audience for every book. Connecting those booklovers with your content, the content they want and may not yet be aware of, may not be as simple as knowing the content exists.

For example, a romance publisher creates a page on their author's website thanking fans for their ongoing support of a series. They include links to an Amazon page where similar books can be purchased.

For publishers and book marketers alike looking to drive online book sales, a little insight into how certain online platforms steer the customer journey, reveal authors and titles, and enable discoverability and purchases, can make a world of difference.

This guide will help unlock some online book marketing knowledge designed to help you turn "ifs" and "buts" into actionable data you can use to optimize messaging, build your online audience, improve your marketing results, and grow sales.



STEP 1

Understand The Analytics Driving Online Platforms

You must first understand how algorithms work within online platforms and therefore how they impact the way your content is surfaced.

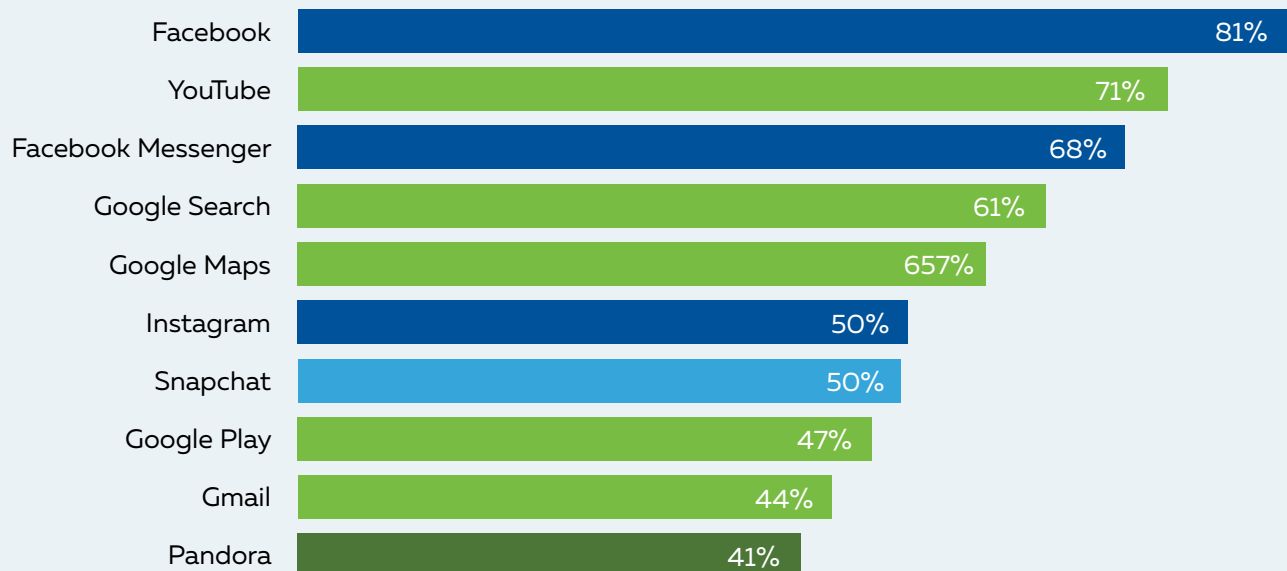
How does search, social media, and retail platforms like Google, Facebook, and Amazon assess online content to ensure users get the best results?

Algorithms: The Great Gatekeepers

For many, the internet has become hands down the easiest and most convenient place to find information, create connections, and shop for goods and services.

When performing those actions most people tend to start off at a few core platforms, several of which are particularly relevant to books—namely Google, Facebook, and Amazon.

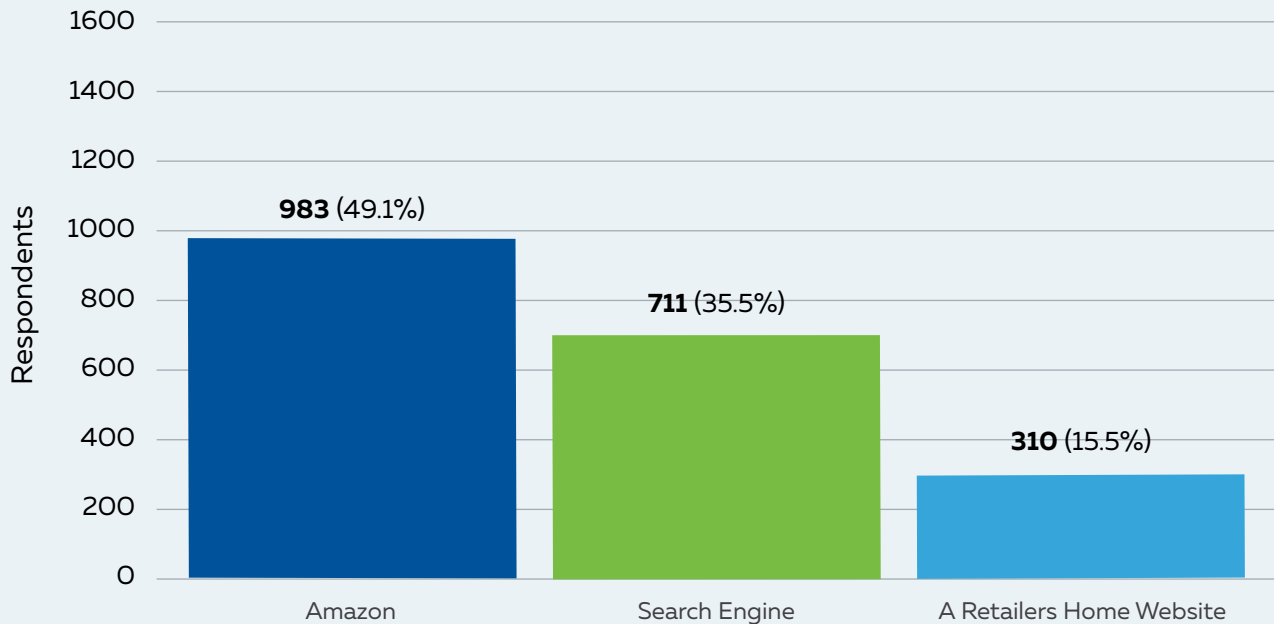
Top 10 Mobile Apps



comScore Mobile Metrix, U.S., Age 18+, June 2017

Depending on what device they're using, most web users can be found on these sites and in these apps.

Where Consumers Begin Their Product Search



Survata.com, December 2017

There's a lot of content on the web, and not all of it is incredibly useful. To ensure only the top quality and most relevant content—high value content—makes its way to the user, each core platform is governed by sets of rules or algorithms.

Making sure your marketing content is high-value isn't about tricking the gatekeeper or finding shortcuts around these rules. It's about understanding why the gatekeepers exist and what elements are being analyzed, measured, and scored.

The Anatomy of an Algorithm

We know that a search engine like Google is constantly tweaking their algorithm, but how does it decide what's important or the elements within?

When content is measured and indexed by a platform's algorithm it produces boatloads of data. These data points help the platform know what is important to a user, and what is not. They include things like:

- Search terms
- Click-through rates
- Number of times content is liked, shared, commented on
- Ads clicked

Search

Search algorithms are designed to provide users with results (organic/paid ads, and listings) that best fit their query.

1. **Keywords:** Search platforms (and most other platforms) first look at the most relevant terms people are searching. Generally speaking, the more they see people searching for a term the higher the value and the greater the competition to “rank” for that given term—that is, to appear toward the top of a results page.

It’s important to note that for search engines, these are keywords used in the copy that appears on a given page.

2. **Visitor Engagement:** Often measured in terms of a bounce rate, this is a measurement of time spent on a web page before leaving.
3. **History:** Does this web page have consistently high levels of traffic? Are other reputable and related web pages linking back to it?
4. **Ease-of-Access:** Mobile responsive, fast loading, secure, intuitive navigation. If it’s easy for the search engine to “crawl” then it is assumed a user can easily navigate the web page or site as well.

Social Media

Social algorithms determine when, where, and how posts/ads appear on a users’ feed.

1. **Engagement:** Likes, comments, shares—all these elements fall into the engagement category. Engaging, sharable content often gets first dibs in a social feed.
2. **Relevance:** Timely, trending, and targeted posts that people care about are often engaging so following the logic of engagement we can see how this works in our favor.
3. **Trust:** Is your brand reputable? Are you sharing content from reputable sources with strong followings? Does this look like clickbait?
4. **History:** What is your relation to the people viewing the content? Have they engaged with your content before? Are they likely to engage again?
5. **Paid:** Most platforms offer some kind of pay-per ad or sponsored content service. This promoted content can be targeted at audiences who are likely to engage. Not organic, but still a valuable measurement.

Retail

Retail algorithms highlight the products users are most likely to purchase and determine which products should be cross-sold on the product detail and cart pages.

1. **Keywords:** These keywords (book specific) live in areas like your book titles, subtitles, descriptions, and categories. Amazon provides a non-user-facing keywords field specific to their search engine that helps connect users with relevant products.
2. **Clicks:** What links, ads, and products pages are people clicking on? What clicks are converting to sale?

Books similar to those that are performing well in this metric will show up more often in a retail search, until they prove otherwise. Algorithms adjust constantly.
3. **Images:** Retail platforms understand people are visual. The more information provided, including images, the more likely we are to show interest. For these reasons retail platforms value products that come with a display images, especially those that support the algorithm. Think the “Look Inside” feature on Amazon.
4. **Price:** Competitively priced in relation to similar books. A mystery book priced too high or too low in comparison to other mystery books of the same quality are likely to score low on this metric.
5. **Brand:** Is the brand—in the case of books, the author or “authoring entity” such as a travel publisher—associated with the product frequently searched with a detailed brand (author bio) page?
6. **Reviews:** Any feedback provided by consumers and reviewers—negative or positive—will support a product listing. Words and phrases used in book reviews also help support keyword rankings.
7. **Special Promotions:** Like a paid ad on Facebook, in the realm of online book sales, products eligible/enrolled in programs like Prime, Kindle Unlimited, and Audible are given a special boost.

Places Algorithms Hang Out

Now that you know what a search, social, and retail algorithm is looking for, you need to know where they are looking and what tactics you can use to most effectively reach your audience on these platforms.

Search

- Title metadata
- Websites and profiles like: author web sites, pages on Goodreads, Amazon, and Wikipedia
- Content marketing—blog posts, videos, landing pages, etc.
- Search and display ads—paid and organic

Social

- Organic/original posts and content from your own website or blog space
- Shared content, reposts from relevant news sources, posts from authors or influencers, etc.
- Influencer marketing and publicity

- Targeted paid ads

Retail

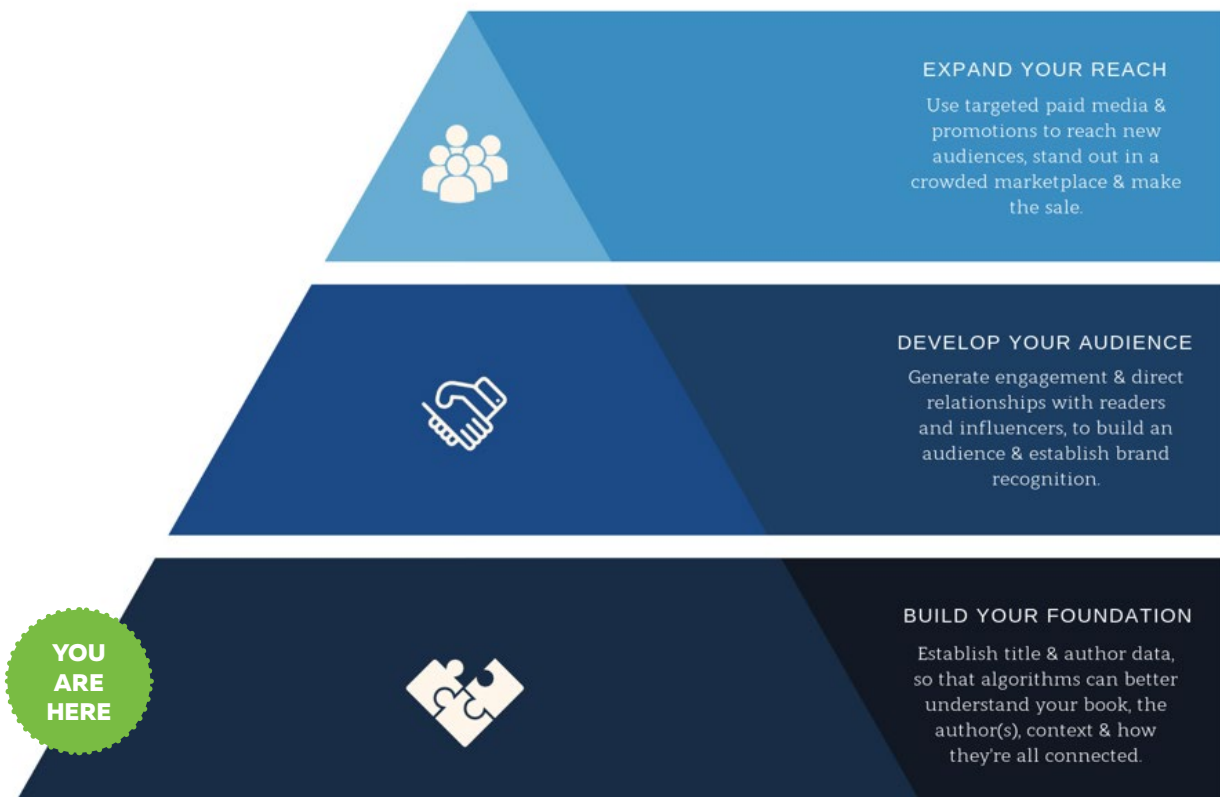
- Title metadata, including title/subtitle, descriptive copy, keywords, and BISAC categories
- Promotions and pricing
- Coop placements
- Advertising and marketing services

Through the insights and the data each of these metrics provides, you can start optimizing your book marketing strategy with high-value content that will increase the chances of discovery and conversion.

STEP 2

How Publishers Can Get More From Their Data

Now that you understand algorithms, learn how to create your content to best serve them, so they understand what your book is, what it's about, etc. – all the things that audiences care about.



Your Marketing Strategy Structure

Building Your Foundation: Content + Context

You can't build a house without a foundation, and the same is true for marketing a book. It is tempting to start with outbound marketing tactics, such as email, social posting, or price promotions – but the way to ensure the greatest likelihood of success of any tactic is to have a solid foundation in place first.

There are a number of content types, tools, and supports that go into planning, designing, and executing a successful book marketing campaign—and it all starts with a solid foundation made up of informative and relevant book and author data.

Algorithms and search engines are intuitive, but only to a certain degree. You need to give algorithms (and potential readers!) rich, detailed information in the right places to make sure they understand what your book is, what it's about, who the author is, how they are related to each other and all of the things that audiences care about. This data is critical for online discovery and will strengthen and support all other marketing and optimization efforts.

There are three key areas to focus on:

1. **Book Metadata:** Feeding accurate and robust product data out to retailers and other channels
2. **Book and Author Profiles:** Placing and managing information about the book and author on authoritative sites and networks—eventually creating connections
3. **Publisher and Author Website(s):** Owning and controlling your information

How do these three foundational elements function?

Book Metadata

Your book metadata powers online discovery and sales. It's used by algorithms to understand what the book is about. Your audience experiences metadata in many different ways.

Keep in mind that your title metadata is often the first discovery mechanism for any book – whether print or digital – online, and it is also frequently the last thing potential buyers see when they are deciding whether to buy the book.

What metadata matters for book marketing?

Your book title and description, cover image, and other key consumer-facing (and algorithm-driving) metadata elements are fundamental to your marketing foundation. Each should provide rich, detailed, and accurate information optimized for both machines and humans in general search, and at point-of-sale.

Title, Subtitle, & Series Information

- Distinctive yet descriptive title and series data helps your book stand out in search (and in consumer's minds).

Cover Image

- Make sure the cover image is clear and legible as a thumbnail and larger sizes. Consumers often only see the cover of your book in search results or retail pages before making a decision about whether or not to learn more.

Product Description

- Provide detailed information about your book. This helps potential buyers find your book and aids in the decision making process.
 - What it is about?
 - Who is it for?
 - What are the key topics and themes?
 - Are there any special features to note?
- Start with a bold headline to capture consumers' attention, and use structural elements such as paragraph breaks, unique formatting, and bullet points to highlight key aspects of the book.

Keywords, Topics, & Phrases

- Use language that speaks to your target audience in ways that they will understand. (How do potential buyers talk about and search for books like this?)
- Incorporate this language into the product description and keywords metadata field.

BISAC Codes & Categories

- Specify three (3) BISAC codes. These should be precise. When possible, they should come from more than one top-level category.

Look Inside & Equivalents

- Previews power book search. Consumers are more likely to purchase if they can 'see' the book content before they buy. (This is especially true for illustrated print books or graphic novels.)

Professional Book Reviews

- Include high-quality review excerpts highlighting a diversity of perspectives on the book when possible.

Author/Contributor Information

- Provide as much detail as possible for each relevant contributor. Include names and roles as well as a brief biography.

Book & Author Profiles on Authoritative Websites

One way search engines—and readers for that matter—make meaningful connections with book content is by looking to authors and publishers, those behind the pages. The benefits of making this type of information readily available are two-fold:

Where to Start With Online Profiles

Develop a detailed presence for the book and author on leading consumer-facing sites and authority platforms. Fill these profiles out as completely as possible, and make sure to link between them whenever you can.

The image shows a screenshot of an Amazon author page for Hugh Howey. The page features a circular profile picture of Hugh Howey, a 'Follow' button, and a bio under 'About Hugh Howey'. Below the bio is a section titled 'Author Updates' with three blog post thumbnails. To the right of the bio is a carousel of book covers including 'Wool', 'Shift', 'Dust', 'Machine Learning', 'Sard.', 'Beacon 23', and 'Half Way Home'. Each book cover includes its title, author name, and price. The top of the page shows the Amazon navigation bar with the search bar and various account links.

Amazon Author Page

An Amazon author page helps connect an author to all their titles within the Amazon universe. It also provides readers with the opportunity to follow authors for updates on events, new books, and new blog posts.

Book & Author Pages on Goodreads & Other Book Communities

- Goodreads is owned by Amazon and is an authoritative source of information on authors and books. It's used by millions of readers to track, rate, and review what they're reading. Activity within Goodreads (content, links, user reviews, followers, etc.) is good for author branding and SEO on both Amazon and Google and elsewhere.
- Also consider adding and updating information on LibraryThing, which enables rich, structured book and author data. (LibraryThing Author pages)

Wikipedia (Typically Only for the Author, but Major Books can Qualify as Well)

- Wikipedia is a primary source of authoritative information for search engines like Google.
- Wikipedia author page views are a good indicator of potential online book sales.
- Authors with published works usually qualify for a Wikipedia listing.
- Make sure information is accurate and up-to-date, including a complete bibliography. (Official publisher websites may be cited as sources.)
- If you've never added or updated a Wikipedia page, learn more about contributing to Wikipedia.

Social Profiles

- Social media profiles can help round out an author's web presence, even if they're not frequently used. Choose social networks your target audiences actively use and post engaging content.
- Be sure to provide complete information on any social profile and to link to any and all other online presence.

Publisher & Author Websites

On your own website, you control everything. Your website should be a central hub for the most up-to-date, authoritative information about any book, author, or series you manage.

Author Information

- Include a detailed biography and photo along with supporting info. This can (and should!) be different than what is found in other places online.
- Link to external author profiles and social networks.

Book & Series Details

- Provide complete title information, including detailed descriptions, reviews, and a cover image.

- Create landing pages for book series as appropriate and provide clear chronological information like pub dates for each title in a given series.
- Help simplify the customer’s buying experience by linking to retail channels.

Press & Events

- Include links to interviews, related news, and tour/speaking/event schedules if appropriate.

Once you have these foundational elements in place—book metadata, profiles, and websites—you can start attacking other parts of your book marketing strategy with confidence—like forming a mutually beneficial relationship with your audience.

STEP 3

How to Create Meaningful Marketing Content to Engage The Right Audience

With a strategic approach to digital book marketing that begins with some core foundational elements – book metadata, author profiles, and publisher websites – you can ensure you have all of the right groundwork in place for successful book marketing campaigns. Now you’re ready to start engaging with readers, building deeper relationships, and growing your online platform.



Smart book marketing starts with understanding your audience – who your likely buyers and readers are, as well as how and where to best reach them. These key tenets of audience development will help you build meaningful publisher and author brands and will ensure that your marketing efforts are relevant and valuable to your target readership.

Understanding Your Book Audience

Core audience research is a critical first step to inform all book marketing activities both online and off. Avoid assumptions about your audience; do the research to find out who is interested in your book (or books like it) and what marketing platforms and tactics are most likely to work.

There are a few questions you want to answer to best define the audience that matters for you:

WHO are they? (Demographics)

You'll want some basic demographic information about your potential readers – age, sex and gender, marital/family status, perhaps income or education. While not particularly nuanced, this data can begin to paint a picture of who your readers are and can help guide and direct your efforts. (For instance, if your book appeals primarily to older parents, you probably don't need to develop a Snapchat presence.)

WHERE are they? (Geographics)

Where do they live? Work? Travel? Are there specific cities, states, or regions your audience is likely to be? Are they typically rural or suburban? What languages are spoken in their communities? This data can inform geo-targeted ad campaigns, book tour locations, what websites or bookstores you send potential buyers to, and more.

WHAT do they do? (Behaviors)

Understand what people are doing in their lives and how that connects to your book and brand. What do they need? Where and how do they shop? What are they searching for, reading about, or commenting on? Your audience is full of real people going about their days. You want to have an idea about how your audience is likely to look for, find, and ultimately engage with you, so you have a better chance of being there when they do.

WHY do they do it? (Psychographics)

To build a richer view of your audience, look to understand their lifestyles, beliefs, and values. If you have an idea of what they care about, then you can better understand why they might want your book and how to engage with them in the right ways.

And remember: you can have multiple audiences. The same book or brand might appeal to different

audience groups for different reasons. You'll want to keep that in mind, as you may want to segment your marketing activity to differentiate your messaging for distinct audiences. For example, a series of health-conscious cookbooks might appeal to dieters, parents looking for healthy family-friendly meals, and fitness buffs for very different reasons.

Doing the Research

The best way to understand your readers is to go where your readers are. You can use leading consumer-facing platforms (and tools built on top of them) to learn more about your audience:

Search

Learn how people search for books, authors, and related topics.

Key Questions:

- What keywords and phrases do they use?
- What topics and categories are most popular?
- What other things are they searching for?
- What sites are influential and relevant for this audience?
- How do search patterns change by region or season?

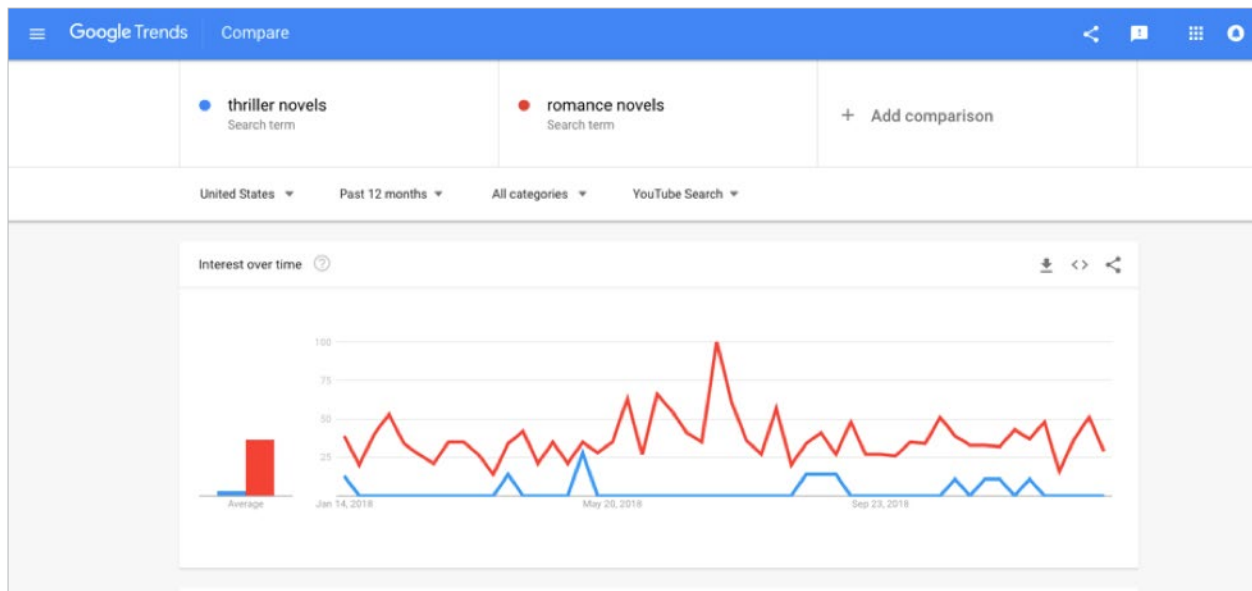
Quick Tools: Use Soovle to see auto-complete search suggestions across major search engines like Google, Amazon, Walmart, YouTube, Bing, Yahoo, and more. You'll see related search suggestions for a fast look into what consumers across different channels are looking for.

The screenshot shows the Soovle search tool interface. At the top, there's a search bar with 'romance novel' entered. Below the search bar, there are several columns of search suggestions, each with a small icon and a count of results. The suggestions include:

- romance novel (8,500ms - \$0.39)
- romance (novel) (8,300ms - \$0.3)
- romance novels (18,500ms - \$0.3)
- romance novels 2018 (1,600ms)
- romance novel covers (1,600ms)
- romance novel excerpts (2,400ms)
- romance novels for teens (580ms)
- romance novel authors (380ms)
- romance novels online (16,600ms)
- romance novelist (400ms - \$0.84)
- romance novel themes (750ms)
- romance novels for men (390ms)
- romance novels (49,500ms - \$0.3)
- romance novels best sellers 2018 (6,300ms - \$0.39)
- romance novels paperback (1,600ms)
- romance novels best sellers 2018 paperback (50ms - \$0.00 - 0)
- romance novels kindle (40ms)
- romance novels for teens (580ms)
- romance novels free (1,600ms)
- christmas romance novels 2018 (0ms - \$0.00 - 0)
- where can you find a romance novel (0ms - \$0.00 - 0)
- what is a good realistic romance novel (0ms - \$0.00 - 0)
- how do you start a romance novel (0ms - \$0.00 - 0)
- who wrote the romance novel lorna doone (0ms - \$0.00 - 0)
- what makes a historical romance novel (0ms - \$0.00 - 0)
- what is a gothic romance novel (0ms - \$0.00 - 0)
- is ladyromantic.com a tagalog romance novel online (0ms - \$0.00)
- what kind of literature is a romance novel (0ms - \$0.00 - 0)
- what name can you give your vampire romance novel (0ms - \$0)
- what are names of current famous romance novel aut (0ms -
- romance novels (49,500ms - \$0.3)
- romance novels audiobooks (1,600ms - \$0.08)
- romance novels asp (0ms - \$0.08)
- romance novels recommendations (260ms - \$0.2)
- romance novels made into movies (0ms - \$0.00)
- romance novels audio (20ms - \$0.00)
- romance novel reviews (260ms)
- romance novel reading (1,300ms)
- romance novel writing (190ms)
- romance novel trailers (180ms)
- romance novels (49,500ms - \$0.3)
- romance novelist hildebrand (0ms - \$0.00)
- romance novels free online (5ms)
- romance novel covers (1,600ms)
- romance novelist roberts (90ms)
- romance novels for teens (580ms)
- romance novelists (900ms - \$0.2)
- romance novelist hildebrand crossword (0ms - \$0.00 - 0)
- romance novels 2018 (1,600ms)
- romance novel publishers (26ms)
- romance novel excerpt (1,70ms)
- romance novelist hildebrand crossword (0ms - \$0.00 - 0)
- romance novel reviews (260ms)
- romance novel authors (380ms)
- romance novels for women (1,600ms)
- romance novel model (130ms)
- romance novel tropes (140ms)
- romance novels (49,500ms - \$0.3)
- best romance novels (140,00ms)
- free romance novels (1,600ms)
- romance novel excerpts (2,400ms)
- historical romance novels (2,60ms)
- how to write a romance novel (1,300ms - \$1.70 - 0.09)
- best historical romance novels (3,500ms - \$0.41 - 0.08)
- christian romance novels (1,60ms)
- top romance novels (2,60ms)
- harlequin romance novels (1,60ms)

Conduct searches yourself on Google or other search engines to see more related searches, top search results, and who is advertising for those search terms. Look at top ranking websites for potential influencers and popular platforms among your audience.

Enter search terms or topics into Google Trends to see relative search volume and popularity, seasonal shifts and trends, regional interest, and more related topics and searches.



Use deeper keyword research tools if you're looking for more extensive keyword ideas or more detailed search volume trends and competition data.

- Google Keyword Planner
- Keywords Everywhere
- Uber suggest
- Answer the Public
- Keyword Explorer

Book Retail & Community Sites

Learn how readers engage with, discuss, and describe books and authors, and understand the competitive landscape.

Key Questions:

- What other books and authors is this audience interested in?
- What genres and categories do they like?
- What words and phrases do they use when reviewing, tagging, talking about, and looking for books?

Quick Tools: Look at the Amazon and other retailers like Barnes & Noble and Kobo for your books or comp titles to read buyer reviews; see similar and competitive books and authors (via "Customers who bought...", "Frequently bought together...", etc.); and see what categories titles are ranking in.

Search for books and authors on LibraryThing to see detailed book data, reviews, and popular reader tags and categories. Use the Tagmash feature to find comparable titles based on similarities in genre, content, tone, and style.

Look at any book or author on Goodreads to see reader reviews, shelves, and lists; get suggested books and authors; and see Goodreads member engagement. From any Goodreads author page, look for the “Similar authors” link just above the author’s book list to see related authors based on Goodreads likes. Check out detailed history and Stats for any book (found at the top of the right-hand sidebar on any book page, next to the book title and below sharing links).

Social

Understand your audience (and potential audience), and find influencers, brand affinities, hashtags, topics, and more.

Key Questions:

- Who is interested in my book, author, series, or publishing brand?
- Who is interested in other comparable/competitive brands?
- What do those audiences look like?
- What else do they like (other brands, media, influencers, platforms, topics)? Where and when are they active?
- How do they engage?

Quick Tools: Get audience sizing, demographics, geography, and related brand affinities and interests (e.g. subjects, celebrities, other books and media) for audiences on Facebook Audience Insights. You can filter by location, age and gender, interest areas, and other market segments and demographic groups. (Facebook page and ad account set-up required. Learn more via Facebook’s help documentation and this walk-through from Hootsuite.)

- **Twitter:** also offers an insights dashboard to let you track engagement and see demographic and interest data about your own followers. Using the Twitter Ad Manager tool (select “Audience Insights” from the Analytics drop-down menu), you can see rich lifestyle and behavioral data about additional audiences based on their interest. (A Twitter ad account is required, though you do not need to run a campaign. Read more about Ad Manager and Audience Insights.)
- **FollowerWonk:** (up to 25k followers) to see high-level demographic and location information, when users are active, how they describe themselves, and identify influential accounts they follow. You can opt to analyze either the followers of an account (who is their audience, what do they look like, and how do they behave?) or users a given account follows (look for new potential influencers or accounts to follow yourself). You can also compare up to three accounts to identify overlaps and new potential influencers and audiences.

- **CrowdTangle:** browser extension on any link (your own website, blog posts, retail product pages, or those of your competitors or influencers) to see public Facebook engagement data as well as top referrers from Twitter, Facebook, and Reddit. This is great to understand social reach (how much social activity has a link generated?) and identify potential influencers (who were the most influential people or accounts that shared it?).
- **Right Relevance:** to identify related topics, popular content and articles, and top influencers for any topic or Twitter user. See what's trending in your niche and find active topical conversations you might join on Twitter. Explore and filter influencers by type (person or organization), by location (where are influencers in a given topic concentrated?), and by Topic Score (Right Relevance's author metric for identified topic areas).

And there are tons of other tools (like SumoRank, BuzzStream Discovery, Klear, BuzzSumo, and Epicbeat just to name a few) to help you see more about how audiences are engaging on social media.

Audience research is the foundation for successful marketing of any kind. Without understanding your audience, you won't be able to meet their needs, engage with them and ultimately influence their book purchasing decisions.

Putting It in Practice

You can use all of this data to better understand who your book audience is, as well as how they talk, what they like, what they look for, and why they want it – all to better position your product and marketing content to find and be found by the right audiences.



Right audience: Research and understand your audience

Right message: Develop and share quality content to interest and engage readers

Right place: Select the right platforms and channels to best reach your audience

Right time: Engage consistently and authentically with your readers throughout their book buying journey

Develop Relevant & Useful Content

Create and/or share relevant content that will interest and engage your audience. Focus on delivering information and entertainment that your readers will find compelling. A key here is to maintain a voice and engagement style that is on-brand, meaning it serves to define and reinforce what your publishing imprint or company, author, website or blog, book series, or even an individual title has on offer and why it is of value.

Quality content has many carry-on benefits:

- Attracts traffic to your site or other channel
- Helps increase social sharing
- Improves leading search, social, and retail algorithms' understanding of you
- Supports and strengthens your online brand authority, including things like your website's ranking and your social influence

When developing content, optimize your content based on the way your audience talks, who they are, and how they behave. In other words, speak their language.

Keeping up with content development can be a challenge. A couple reminders:

- You don't always have to generate new content from scratch; often, sharing excellent content from others is nearly as helpful and interesting – and takes advantage of the social aspect of the Internet and social media.
- Think "easy" content – sometimes just saying what you're reading right now and how you feel about it is plenty.
- Don't forget to periodically market. Mention your books, lists, imprints – especially when you've got something of particular interest to say.
- Measure what you're doing so that you can stop doing those things that aren't working and use your time wisely.

Choose Channels that Matter & Be Flexible

Understanding how and where your audience consumes information will help you identify which channels are right for your brand. Properly managing multiple channels can be time-consuming, so it makes sense to start small and add on as necessary.

And though all audiences are different, there are some channels that tend to matter more than others regardless.

1. Email

Email can be your most powerful channel. Subscribers have opted in to a direct relationship with you and should be considered GOLD! Treat them accordingly. Offer e-books, promotions, exclusive and original content through your blog and other channels to continue to grow your email list.

Email To-Dos:

- Make opting-in simple. Make opting-out just as simple. Make opting-in attractive. Give subscribers incentives for signing up to hear more from you (think giveaways, excerpts, discounts, exclusive sneak peaks, and more).
- Review email analytics – open rates, click-through rates, and more – and always be tweaking to improve engagement. Try A/B testing to see what design, images, or subject lines your audience best responds to.
- Don't email too often and don't sell your email list. Let subscribers know what to expect (things like frequency and types of content), and most importantly, respect the list!
- Always include at least one Call-to-Action. Basically, ask your audience to do something.

2. Social Media

Billions (yes, billions!) of consumers use social media daily. Your brand cannot afford to ignore it. Whether it's Twitter, Facebook, Goodreads, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, or LinkedIn, understanding your audience and having clear objectives will help you determine which platforms make sense.

Social Media To-Dos:

- Choose platforms that align with what you have and what you're capable of providing. E.g. A portion of your audience may be on YouTube, but unless you can consistently create engaging videos, you may wish to reach them another way.
- Mix up your content, using images, text, quizzes or polls, charts, videos, and so on to engage people in different ways.

- Use scheduling tools to streamline posting across your social channels. (Good examples of these include Buffer and HootSuite.)
- Do more than just post. ENGAGE by commenting, sharing and liking. It's called "social" media for a reason.
- Include publisher or author name in all account bios. For authors, you will also want to include most recent book or series name.
- Use best practices tools for properly sizing images for each network.
- Stay in the loop with your influencers and competitor channels. Notice which posts are working for them.
- Keep all channels in line with your brand standards.
- If you have something you really want to blow out, consider paid social media ads. They're affordable and effective. (We'll cover ads more in a later section!)

3. Website / Blog

Your own site (or sites) should always be acting as a hub for all of the spokes of your online brand.

Website To-Dos:

- Keep your site fresh and up-to-date. Site visitors should know that the site is active and "lived-in." Develop a schedule for refreshing content that makes sense for you and your audience.
- Create landing pages and blog posts that can help improve search engine optimization and bring new visitors in.
- Include prominent email sign-up throughout the site. If someone is on your site, don't lose the opportunity to try to convert them to a subscriber.
- Also link to your social channels and invite people to follow or like you there. (And vice versa: share blog posts and other website content on social media and invite those fans to visit your site.)
- Don't forget to link to retailers who offer your books for sale. Consider if this right for you as well.

4. Community Engagement

Engagement is key. As you build relationships with readers, try to be consistent. The goal is ongoing relationships that offer mutual value beyond just one interaction/transaction.

Engagement To-Dos:

- Participate in relevant online communities and submit your posts.
- Give your fans an opportunity to contribute– ask them to weigh in on a book cover design, caption an image or ask “what are you reading this weekend?”.
- Note the insights for each platform and when your fans are online. Engage with them in real-time.
- Make yourself available as an expert for new sources.
- Shine the spotlight on others – mention followers or influencers and share their posts.
- To save time, create lists of ready-to-use replies to common questions, or encouraging gifs or emojis to have handy. Stay engaged even when you’re short of time!
- Have a special announcement? Try Facebook live or Instagram stories.

STEP 4

How To Reach Untapped Readers Who Want What You Are Selling

Now that you better understand your audience and have built-out your online platform, you can now reach those untapped readers who want what you're selling. This can feel challenging at first, so we'll help get you past any trepidation to a place where running ad campaigns is intuitive, effective, and inexpensive.



When to Advertise

Your organic and earned media efforts alone are unlikely to cut through the noise – advertising can amplify your message to a targeted audience and expand your reach to the precise consumer. The key to executing a successful – and cost-effective – digital advertising campaign is knowing when, where, and if it makes sense to spend.

In particular, social ads are great for granular, narrow and multidimensional targeting (combining demographics, psychographics, and behavioral traits to form a target audience).

Key Questions You Need to Answer Before You Decide to Advertise:

1. What is my goal?

The most common ways advertising can impact your book marketing efforts are driving pre-order awareness, purchase (before other marketing and publicity efforts have had time to reach likely buyers) and maintaining momentum on a successful book (where there is likely to be greater untapped sales potential in new audiences).

Advertising can also give you a relatively low-risk way of testing a hypothesis. If you believe a book will resonate with a certain audience, it is worth testing your theory with a small advertising spend before launching a more resource-intensive campaign.

2. Will it be difficult to reach this audience without advertising?

You may wish to advertise if you are competing against other big books, online media (e.g., blog posts, articles, videos), or other products. You can help your book break through the noise by making sure your ad targets a specific audience segment with attractive, targeted messaging.

It is also important to pay attention to the absence of certain leading indicators that would tell you people are becoming aware of the book—the lack of media attention, reviews, pre-orders, search interest, and website traffic. If any or all of these are low, advertising may be a good idea.

3. Can you, with any degree of certainty, reach this audience with advertising?

Based on the criteria for creating a targetable audience, you can construct an advertising campaign in correlation to a book or series. The key here is specificity and granularity of consumer attributes. For advertising to be cost-effective, the ad needs to be narrowly aimed at a very specific audience.

Be aware of competitors advertising in the same space, especially if they have deep pockets. Keep in mind that these competitors may not necessarily be other book publishers, but could be travel companies, media companies, or others in the same general topic area.

4. Do you have adequate resources to effectively launch and manage a campaign?

In terms of a budget, digital advertising is often seen as expensive. You don't necessarily need to spend a lot to run an effective ad campaign. However, spending is directly proportionate to human resource requirements. Time and effort to choose the right platform, develop the target audience, create the ad units, monitor performance, manage your budget, and react to engagement are what make campaigns effective and efficient. It is necessary to go into an advertising campaign with a clear view of all the resources required. Advertising can help greatly, but it does demand time and attention to execute successfully.

Examples of When to Advertise:

- **Pre-order sales:** If early buzz is not picking up as expected, that could be a sign other marketing and publicity efforts have not yet had time to reach likely buyers. Consider a pre-order campaign targeting fans of the author to drive pre-order awareness and purchase.
- **Maintain (or regain) momentum:** For successful titles past their peak, you may find untapped sales potential among price-sensitive buyers (a promotional offer could get them to finally buy) and other adjacent audiences who may not have been the primary targets for your launch campaign (perhaps fans of similarly-themed TV or movies who also shop at Barnes & Noble).
- **Break through the noise:** Targeted keyword ads in Google and Amazon can improve discoverability in a crowded field – and if successful will improve your organic rankings as well.
- **Make some noise:** It is also important to pay attention to the absence of certain leading indicators. These indicators will tell you people are becoming aware of the book—media attention, reviews and ratings, search interest, and website traffic. If any or all of these are low, advertising may be a good idea.
- **Testing ground:** Advertising can also give you a relatively low-risk way of testing a hypothesis. If you think a book could resonate with a certain audience, it may be worth testing the theory with a small advertising spend before launching a more resource-intensive campaign.






Where to Advertise

Using targeted paid media and promotions to reach new audiences, boost your signal in a crowded marketplace, and make the sale can often prove very effective for publishers.

Using Social Media

The key is to target by demographic and psychographic. Narrow down your audience to their applied values, opinions, attitudes, and interests. All of these attributes are available to you through Facebook Ads Manager, Pinterest Ads, LinkedIn Marketing Solutions, and Bookbub Partners

A sample audience may resemble this:

	Location:	New York City
	Age:	45-60
	Gender:	Male
	Language:	English
	Interest:	Netflix, Barnes & Noble, Reading, and Stranger Things (TV Series)

Using Amazon Marketing Services

Amazon Marketing Services (AMS) is Amazon's targeted cost-per-click text and banner advertising platform.

Four Ways to Target:

1. By keyword

Use suggested keywords for keyword-targeted advertising campaigns to reach consumers who are searching for terms and phrases related to your product.

2. By product

Run ads that will be seen by consumers looking at related, similar, and competitive products. You may select the product detail pages for specific products where you want your ad to appear.

3. By category

Rather than targeting specific products, you may instead choose to target consumers shopping and browsing in related product categories.

4. By interest

Reach consumers with a demonstrated interest in specific subjects or genres. Interest is determined by Amazon based on past consumer behavior and is not specific to where those consumers are currently shopping.

Three Ad Types:

1. Sponsored product ads

These keyword-targeted ads appear as sponsored listings in mobile and desktop search results as well as on relevant product detail pages. (Placement is determined by ad rank, based on your current bid, keyword relevance, and ad performance.) These may be automatically targeted using Amazon's suggested keywords, or manually targeted using your own keywords.

2. Product display ads

Advertise your book across Amazon (desktop and mobile) by targeting specific products, categories, or interest areas. PDAs may appear on product detail pages, the bottom of search result pages, on customer review and offer listing pages, and in Amazon merchandising emails. (Note that PDAs cannot be targeted by keyword.)

3. Headline search ads

These are highly-branded, keyword-targeted ads that appear above search results. You may advertise multiple products in a single headline search ad, and you can drive traffic from these ads to a brand page or customized landing page on Amazon. These are especially powerful to improve brand recognition for authors and series.

References & Resources

- [Getting Started](#) [Amazon Marketing Services help documentation]
- Book-specific guidelines for Product Display Ads and Sponsored Products [\[AMS help\]](#)

Who to Target

Ads can and should be targeted, controllable, and measurable. For all ads, make sure you can create a targetable audience that is a fit for the book, author, or series.

Expand Your Reach

You should consider investing more dollars or resources to reach untapped sales potential among broader audiences. Larger affinity groups who are interested in other forms of related media—movies, television, music, games, news outlets, podcasts—are highly attractive if they’re a good fit. They tend to be much larger than typical book and author audiences and capturing just a small percentage of that larger group can mean very meaningful sales for a book.

- Target broader adjacent audiences to reach many new potential readers.
- Target consumers generally interested in your categories, topics, or genres.
- Target fans/followers of well-known media and influencers who have reviewed or blurbed the book. (Creative should include a quote.)
- You may want to narrow your targeting to improve conversion by layering in other “book” affinities, for instance you might target fans of Stranger Things who also buy on Nook.
- Be sure to use compelling creative (quotes from known influencers, eye-catching visuals) and a strong call to action (e.g. discounted price for a limited time).

How to Measure Potential Return

How to Measure at the Moment of the Ad

Think back to the section, *When to Advertise*, knowing your goals will provide a sense of hope for your outcome. Do you want to drive pre-order awareness? Increase sales? Maintain momentum on a successful book? Knowing your goals will help you determine KPIs that are directly related.

Initial descriptive KPIs to focus on:

- Click-through-rate: the number of people who click on your ad compared to how many people see it on their feed

- Cost-per-click: the goal here is to not be spending an outrageous amount of money on clicks – \$12 per click is way too much
- Measure of success: is the money I am spending selling books?

The end goal is to have a sense of what everything is worth to you.

For example:

- Email address: \$1
- 1 book sold by author with extensive catalog: \$5
- 1 book sold by author with no catalog: \$2

How to Holistically Measure Your Ad

Do not stop your analysis! Continue to measure results after your ad has finished its run. Your KPIs will not be as one-to-one descriptive or directly attributable as time goes on but you will almost always see a knock-on effect of paid advertising, with a lot of the value being captured after the ad finishes its run.

KPIs to measure holistically:

- Rise in sales and increased search rank on Amazon
- Increased Amazon author reviews
- Sales lifted across the authors whole catalog
- Search rank for the book's product page (growth made during a paid ad campaign does not disappear when the ad is finished but translates to positive organic growth)

Learning how to advertise online is part of your ROI. This is a key holistic measure for your online strategy. As you become a savvier online advertiser, you will notice a well-targeted ad campaign does not need to be resource-intensive and will elicit tremendous ROI.


So, how much should I spend?

This is an oft-asked question. Our suggestion is to begin with "small bets" and measure the KPIs closely. As you begin to see what is working, stop small spends where the ROI is not there or where ways to improve the ROI aren't clear. Any time something is working, double down and continue to monitor. Holistically. Ideally, as you learn, you will develop a sense of a reasonable opening budget for certain title conditions and what types of initial KPIs you'll need to see before you are able to make the go/no-go decision. It takes some time, but often not as much as one might think. Advertising platforms, after all, want you to succeed! (So that you'll spend more, of course but that's okay if the ROI is there.)

The Wrap-Up

This is a 30,000-foot view of the opportunities available for expanding your reach. The information above should help you develop a feel for the game and encourage you to take a stab at advertising to your target audience. Remember, you do not have to spend a lot to be effective. Small spends can provide impressive movement on your titles.

For publishers and book marketers alike looking to drive online book sales, a little insight into how certain online platforms steer the customer journey, reveal authors and titles, and enable discoverability and purchases, can make a world of difference. The information provided in this Publisher's Guide to Navigating the World of Digital Book Marketing is intended to help turn your "ifs" and "buts" into actionable data you can use to optimize messaging, build your online audience, improve your marketing results, and grow sales.



Get the Marketing Tools & Insights that Matter

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