

BARNES & NOBLE

Final Research Report

Elizabeth Schaible

JMC 436: Public Relations Research

Fall 2023

Arizona State University

Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Client Backgrounder (Report 1)</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Communications Audit (Report 2).....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Qualitative Research Report (Report 3)</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Survey Research Report (Report 4)</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>Memo 5.....</i>	<i>47</i>
<i>Client Evaluation (Report 5).....</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>63</i>
<i>Conclusion.....</i>	<i>65</i>
<i>Works Cited.....</i>	<i>66</i>
<i>Appendix A: Interview Questions.....</i>	<i>69</i>
<i>Appendix B: Interview Transcript.....</i>	<i>70</i>
<i>Appendix C: Survey.....</i>	<i>76</i>
<i>Appendix D: Memos 1 – 4.....</i>	<i>83</i>

Introduction

The attached research portfolio is an accumulation of primary and secondary research conducted for a client over the span of three months in JMC 436: Public Relations Research, a strategic communications course at Arizona State University.

The client chosen for this course was Barnes & Noble. The work completed in this course is in no way affiliated or produced in partnership with Barnes & Noble.

This document features a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative methods that were utilized to research and implement communications strategies after identifying an opportunity or area of growth for a chosen company. More specifically, this portfolio includes a client backgrounder, communications audit, qualitative research report (interview), survey, client evaluation, and final recommendations. Barnes & Noble's TikTok account was also analyzed and tracked over the course of 10 weeks. This social media tracking allowed for the creation of memos that identified and interpreted trends, patterns, and data on Barnes & Noble's TikTok.

The client backgrounder features synthesized secondary research with proper APA citations. It includes consumer and competitor analyses, along with the information needed to identify research objectives. It serves as the foundation for the rest of the report.

The communications audit provides an in-depth look into Barnes & Noble's social media channels, demonstrating various strengths and weaknesses. The audit gives insight into how the company's social media presence compares to others in the book-retail industry.

The interview allows for qualitative responses that support an in-depth analysis on established research questions. The detailed responses give rich descriptions and a deeper understanding of a consumer's opinions and motivations.

The survey functions as a means to generalize prior findings and provide quantitative statistics to support future communications recommendations.

The purpose of this portfolio is to demonstrate the knowledge and expertise gained in public relations research over the course of a semester. This work showcases the precision and detail required to successfully construct strategic communications recommendations for a brand.

BARNES & NOBLE

Client Backgrounder (Report 1)



Barnes & Noble

122 5th Ave FL 2
New York, NY 10011
(212) 633-3300

Website:

<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/>

Communication Channels

Blog: Barnes & Noble Press Blog - <https://press.barnesandnoble.com/bnpress-blog>

Facebook: @barnesandnoble - <https://www.facebook.com/barnesandnoble>

Instagram: @barnesandnoble - <https://www.instagram.com/barnesandnoble>

LinkedIn: Barnes & Noble, Inc. - <https://www.linkedin.com/barnes-&-noble>

Pinterest: @barnesandnoble - <https://www.pinterest.com/barnesandnoble>

Snapchat: @bnsnaps - <https://www.snapchat.com/add/bnsnaps?locale=en-US>

TikTok: @bnbuzz - <https://www.tiktok.com/@bnbuzz>

Twitter: @BNBuzz - <https://twitter.com/bnbuzz>

YouTube: @barnesandnoble - <https://www.youtube.com/barnesandnoble>

Management Team Members

Chief Executive Officer: James Daunt

Chief Merchandising Officer: Jackie De Leo

General Counsel: Brad Feuer

Chief Financial Officer, Executive Vice President: Allen W. Lindstrom

Chief Creative Officer, Union Square & Co. Publisher: Emily Meehan

Chief Information Officer: Carlo Pochintesta

Vice President of Human Resources: Michelle Smith

Company Mission

Barnes & Noble's mission is to operate the best omni-channel specialty retail business in America, helping both its customers and booksellers reach their aspirations, while being a credit to the communities it serves.

Company History

According to Barnes & Noble History, Barnes & Noble's roots can be traced back to 1873 when Charles M. Barnes started a book business in Wheaton, Illinois. His son, William, went to New York City in 1917 and established the Barnes & Noble flagship store with partner G. Clifford Noble. The store quickly developed an outstanding reputation for its wide selection of books. Bookseller Leonard Riggio acquired the Barnes & Noble flagship store and trade name in 1971, allowing it to become "The World's Largest Bookstore" with 150,000 textbook and trade titles. The company expanded in the 1970s and 1980s, with new bookstores being added throughout the country. In the 1990s, Riggio developed the idea of a "superstore," which ensured that a variety of items, such as books, games, music, and gifts, were sold in a spacious, welcoming environment. In the 1990s and early 2000s, Barnes & Noble vastly grew its digital presence. BN.com was launched in May 1997, and the company released its brand of e-reading products in 2009. Barnes & Noble is now privately owned by Elliot Advisors (UK) Limited and is currently the No. 1 book retailer in the United States ("Barnes & Noble History," 2023).

Products and Services

Barnes & Noble offers a variety of products, including books, toys, games, music, movies, stationery, and gifts. Collectively, 190 million physical books are sold annually between retail stores and online operations ("Barnes & Noble," 2023). In addition, Barnes & Noble carries around 3,000 magazine titles and more than 400 newspaper titles ("Mergent Intellect," 2023). While Barnes & Noble book prices tend to vary by title, the retail price of an adult hardback is usually under \$30, and a paperback is approximately \$15 ("Bookstores Industry Profile," 2023). A mixture of proprietary pricing technology and merchant planning is used to determine the prices for all items on the website ("BN.com Pricing," 2023). However, website prices are usually lower than full-service retail store prices due to the cheaper cost of fulfilling online orders ("About BN.com," 2023). Similarly, local stores may offer special promotions at times that reduce in-person product costs ("About BN.com," 2023). To purchase products, consumers can visit a Barnes & Noble store or shop

online at BN.com. There are approximately 600 Barnes & Noble brick-and-mortar superstores nationwide, and around 1 million physical book titles are sold per year ("Mergent Intellect," 2023). The company also established its NOOK platform in 2009, which allows customers to purchase and read over 3 million e-Books, digital comics, newspapers, and magazines via NOOK, IOS or Android services ("NOOK Tablets & eReaders," 2023).

Financial Summary

Barnes & Noble became a privately owned company in 2019 after being acquired by Elliot Advisors (UK) Limited ("About BN.com," 2023). As of 2019, Barnes & Noble had approximately 1,596 shareholders and close to 7,000 employees ("Mergent Online," 2019). According to Mergent Intellect, Barnes & Noble generated over \$2.8 billion dollars in sales in 2019. Total revenue was listed at \$3,552,745,000, which is around \$2.5 billion less than the revenue reported in 2015 ("Mergent Intellect," 2023). Business Wire reported that Barnes & Noble's NOOK platform contributed to around \$92 million of this revenue, while the rest was gathered from retail stores. Gross profit was listed at just a little more than \$1 billion ("Barnes & Noble Reports," 2019). Decline in total revenue has occurred every year in the past decade, but sales rose more than 4% in 2022 (Selyukh, 2023).

Business Model

Barnes & Noble gathers revenue from its brick-and-mortar retail stores and website, which offer a broad array of items. The company has cafés in all its newer stores, which are licensed to sell Starbucks products. Customers can use Barnes & Noble gift cards at café locations, which contributes to the total revenue at retail stores (Havens-Bowen, 2023). Barnes & Noble profits are generated from a mix of digital offerings and in-store products.

Barnes & Noble Education is a separate spin-off company of Barnes & Noble, Inc. that focuses on providing students and faculty with educational products to ensure success in the classroom ("Barnes & Noble Education," 2023). According to Business Wire, financial reports from the third quarter in 2023 illustrate that Barnes & Noble Education sales are at \$447.1 million, an 11% increase compared to the prior fiscal year. This increase in revenue can be attributed to students and faculty returning to in-person classroom activities after the COVID-19 pandemic ("Barnes & Noble Education Reports," 2023). Major shareholders of Barnes & Noble Education include Greenhaven Road Investment Management, L.P., Vanguard Group Inc., and Royce & Associates Lp ("BNED Stock," 2023). Barnes & Noble College is a subsidiary of

Barnes & Noble Education and directly specializes in college campus retail services. Its *First Day Complete* program offered \$67 million in revenue in 2023, a 76% increase from the prior year ("Barnes & Noble Education Reports," 2023).

Industry Overview

According to a report conducted by First Research, the global book retail industry is expected to be valued at \$112.1 billion in 2023. Physical retail stores and websites are mainly used to sell books in this industry. Large companies in this industry include Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million, and Follett, which are all based in the United States. The United States, China, Germany, and the UK are countries that make the largest contributions to global book sales. The book retail industry has around 6,500 establishments nationwide, with a combined annual revenue of around \$10 billion. Book sales compose approximately 50% of collected revenue in this industry, and more than 20% is from traded books and textbooks. Other sources of revenue include the sale of various items such as toys, gifts, games, craft supplies, religious books, and school supplies ("Bookstores Industry Profile," 2023). As of 2019, Barnes & Noble owned 26.6% of the U.S. book retail market share, outranking all its competitors ("Barnes & Noble Company Profile," 2019).

Consumer Analysis

The target consumer in the book retail industry is an educated, relatively wealthy, married woman ("Bookstores Industry Profile," 2023). However, the growth of social media, specifically TikTok, has allowed this industry to target a younger audience. A popular video group on TikTok labeled #BookTok has caused a resurgence of reading for Generation Z, particularly female teenagers (Barnett, 2023). As of September 2023, #BookTok has garnered over 177 billion global views and is one of TikTok's most popular hashtags, encouraging teens to flock to bookstores (McMillen, 2023). According to a poll conducted by the Publishers Association, 59% of surveyed 16-25-year-olds said that #BookTok has helped them discover a passion for reading. Fifty-five percent said that they turn to #BookTok for reading recommendations, and 68% said that #BookTok has inspired them to pick up a book and read. As a result, 49% of users also replied that they have visited a physical bookstore to buy a book after engaging with #BookTok (Brown, 2022). This platform has encouraged a resurgence of reading among younger people and has illustrated it as a popular, imaginative, and appealing activity (Howarth, 2023). In 2020, the year #BookTok launched, Barnes & Noble reported a 14% gain in book sales (McMillen, 2023). Barnes & Noble and #BookTok became partners and launched a campaign in summer 2022, encouraging participants to partake in a seasonal reading challenge

and share their thoughts on TikTok (Elizabeth, 2022). For marketing purposes, there is a #BookTok discover page on the Barnes & Noble website, along with specific #BookTok tables in local stores ("Barnes & Noble," 2023).

Competitor Profile

According to a WordsRated report (2023), Amazon makes \$28 billion each year from book sales, making it Barnes & Noble's biggest direct competitor. While these sales form only 10% of Amazon's profit, the company reports controlling between 50% and 80% of nationwide book distribution. Selling at least 300 million print books a year, Amazon is responsible for 40% of print books sales in the United States. Amazon is also an industry leader when it comes to e-reading. Approximately 487 million Kindle books are sold every year, and the company owns 83% of the e-reading market share when Kindle Unlimited is included (Curcic, 2023). Barnes & Noble faced financial losses in the past decade due to steady sale increases from Amazon e-books and e-readers (Hiltzik, 2023). Barnes & Noble faced its seventh quarterly loss in a row by the end of 2018 (Hiltzik, 2023). After James Daunt was appointed new Barnes & Noble CEO in 2019, the company began focusing more on book products in retail stores, evicting unnecessary items that were not selling (Hiltzik, 2023). By "putting the books first," Barnes & Noble set itself apart from Amazon and stated that Amazon does not care about the books, but Barnes & Noble does (Aratani, 2023). Amazon may have convenience, but Barnes & Noble focuses on community and discovery (Aratani, 2023). After implementing this change, Barnes & Noble began seeing an increase in sales and started opening new brick-and-mortar shops (Hiltzik, 2023).

Problem Definition

With the resurgence of reading occurring among newer generations, it is important to understand what drives younger people to buy books in physical stores. In terms of book sales, Barnes & Noble can leverage the continuous growth of #BookTok by establishing new, interactive campaigns that target a younger audience.

Research Objectives

1. Explore what motivates Generation Z to purchase books in retail stores.
2. Examine which Barnes & Noble social media content accumulates the most interaction.
3. Discover how the implementation of #BookTok stands in Barnes & Noble stores influences consumers' willingness to purchase books.

BARNES & NOBLE

Communications Audit (Report 2)

Introduction

This communications audit provides a thorough analysis of Barnes & Noble's Instagram and TikTok accounts, as well as traditional media coverage received within the last 30 days. Due to the influence of #BookTok in Barnes & Noble stores and online, the research team deemed it necessary to examine the intricacies of Barnes & Noble's TikTok. Social media content and traditional media were also tracked for Amazon Books, Barnes & Noble's largest competitor. Barnes & Noble has Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and X accounts. Amazon Books has Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and X accounts. Since Amazon Books does not have an active TikTok account, the company's X account was analyzed instead. The purpose of this audit was to track traditional media coverage and compare engagement rates, content, and coverage on social media platforms.

Research Questions

1. How does Barnes & Noble utilize #BookTok to increase engagement?
2. What kind of Barnes & Noble Instagram posts are the most effective?
3. How is Barnes & Noble being represented in traditional media?

Methodology

The research team analyzed social media posts and traditional media coverage from August 30, 2023 - September 28, 2023.

Rival IQ and Social Blade were the databases used to find and track relevant information. Manual calculations were also conducted. Muck Rack was used to track statistics for traditional media coverage, and certain filters were applied to narrow down the number of articles to ensure a thorough examination of the content.

As mentioned above, Amazon Books does not have a TikTok account, so the company's X account was researched instead. We deemed it crucial to analyze Barnes & Noble's TikTok due to its prevalence in the #BookTok community.

An overview of the analysis from August 30, 2023 - September 28, 2023:

- Barnes & Noble
 - 69 Instagram posts
 - 52 TikTok posts
 - 130 articles
- Amazon Books
 - 11 Instagram posts
 - 9 Twitter posts
 - 166 articles

Social Media

Barnes & Noble - Instagram (@barnesandnoble)

Barnes & Noble's Instagram has 871,512 followers and is following 2,362 accounts. In the past 30 days, the account posted 69 times, approximately 16 posts per week, and achieved an engagement rate of 1.34%. Of the 69 posts, there were 50 pictures and 19 videos. Five of the pictures featured calendar links to live videos, and three photo posts were carousel style that included more than one picture in the post. Barnes & Noble received 801,635 total likes and comments within the past month, increasing its engagement total by 834% from the prior period. There were 8,288 followers gained in the past 30 days, which was a 19.3% increase from the prior month. Photos are the most common post type on this platform and earn a 1.61% follower engagement rate, however, Instagram reels follow close behind with a follower engagement rate of 1.10%. On average, Barnes & Noble received 1,023.81 likes and 2.31 comments per one post within the past month. The best time for Barnes & Noble to post content is at 5 a.m. MST.

Key Finding #1 - Posts featuring celebrities receive higher engagement.

The top-liked post during the analyzed period garnered 570,528 likes and featured a partnership with Millie Bobby Brown (see Figure 1). Brown's celebrity status allowed for engagement rates to thrive on this post, with a 65.6% follower engagement rate, according to Rival IQ. Barnes & Noble opened the caption with #NineteenSteps, the name of Brown's new book.

A video of Matthew McConaughey promoting his newest children's book was the third most-liked post in the past month, receiving 18,586 likes. The 22 comments were overwhelmingly positive, showing support for McConaughey as both a person and author (see Figure 2).

Another notable mention is a photo that was posted of Jake Gyllenhaal holding his new book, which received over 5,000 likes (see Figure 3). This photo was posted on September 8 and was the second most-liked post of the week. Barnes & Noble successfully used Instagram to partner with Gyllenhaal and advertise his new book, which



FIGURE 1: MILLIE BOBBY BROWN'S PARTNERSHIP WITH BARNES & NOBLE

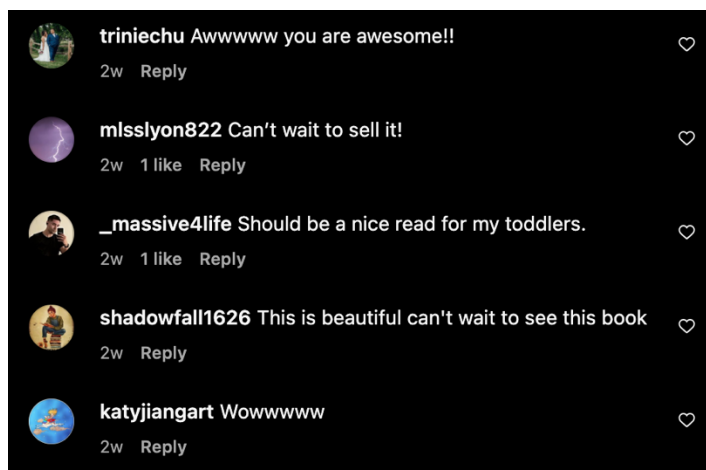


FIGURE 2: COMMENTS SUPPORTING MATTHEW MCCONAUGHEY



FIGURE 3: JAKE GYLLENHAAL WITH BARNES & NOBLE

serves as another example that high engagement rates are driven by celebrity content. It is worth noting that all three of these posts received a significantly higher number of likes and comments than the average.

Key Finding #2 – Meme posts elicit more reactions from users than non-meme posts.

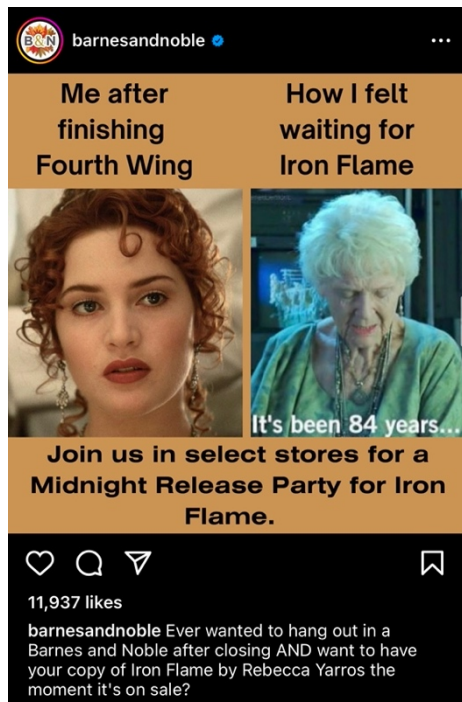


FIGURE 4: BARNES & NOBLE'S BOOK MEME

Compared with other posts that advertise in a straight-forward and informative way, funny and lighthearted posts encourage followers to engage. The comments on both meme posts mentioned above are positive and praise the creativity of the post (see Figure 6). Barnes & Noble also tends to interact with positive comments, either by replying to them or liking them (see Figure 7).

Barnes & Noble posted a book meme on September 19, which received 11,937 likes and 93 comments. Since the average number of comments on a post is usually fewer than three, users thoroughly recognized the comedic tone of this post and heavily interacted with it (see Figure 4). Another meme post, featuring a scene from the popular sitcom *New Girl* was used to advertise Barnes & Noble's book haul and the benefits of becoming a member (see Figure 5). This post received 20 comments, all of which either expressed amusement or curiosity about what was being promoted.

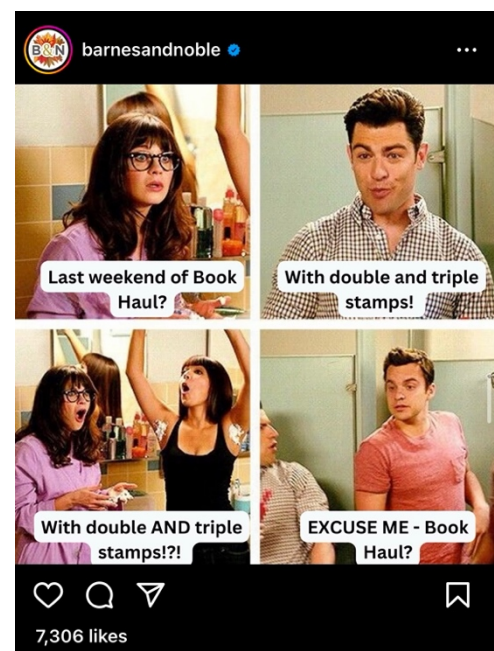


FIGURE 5: BARNES & NOBLE'S *NEW GIRL* MEME

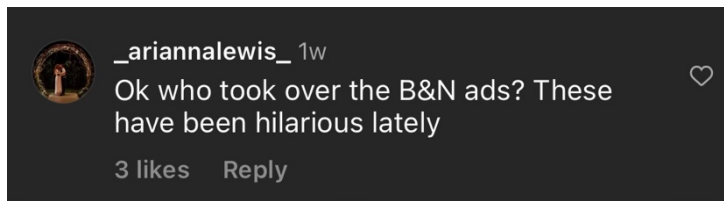


FIGURE 6: USER COMMENT ON POST



FIGURE 7: BARNES & NOBLE INTERACTS WITH COMMENTS

Barnes & Noble – TikTok (@bnbuzz)

Barnes & Noble’s TikTok account has approximately 173,100 followers and is following 1,359 accounts. The account has cumulatively garnered 3.2 million likes for all its videos. In the past 30 days, 52 videos were posted with an engagement rate of 8.89%. The total number of likes, shares, and comments on these 52 videos add up to 785,364, which is a 1,650% increase from the last month. The company received 738,797 likes, 22,644 comments, and 23,913 shares. The most-liked post for the past month had 484,000 likes and earned 53 times more engagement than the most-liked post from the month before, illustrating promising growth and opportunity. Every post featured at least one hashtag to increase clicks and engagement. Added up, the videos posted within the past month received 11,441,772 views. On average, Barnes & Noble posts more than 12 videos per week, and the best time to post is at 5 p.m. MST.

Key Finding #1 – Trends with audience participation have the most engagement.

The two top-liked posts in the past month were part of the same series. Barnes & Noble posted a video a little over a month ago with an employee saying that if a person’s name is mentioned in the video, a friend owes them a book. Part two and

part three of this trend were posted in the past month, receiving a respective 124,200 likes and 461,500 likes (see Figures 8 and 9). The idea of this video revolves around audience engagement and encourages users to share, tag, and comment. Because there are so many names to choose from, multiple parts of this series can be made. User comments reflect anticipation and interest as they wait for their names to be mentioned in one of the videos (see Figure 10). The tone of these posts tends to be playful and relaxed. The focus is on increasing brand awareness rather than promoting or selling a product.

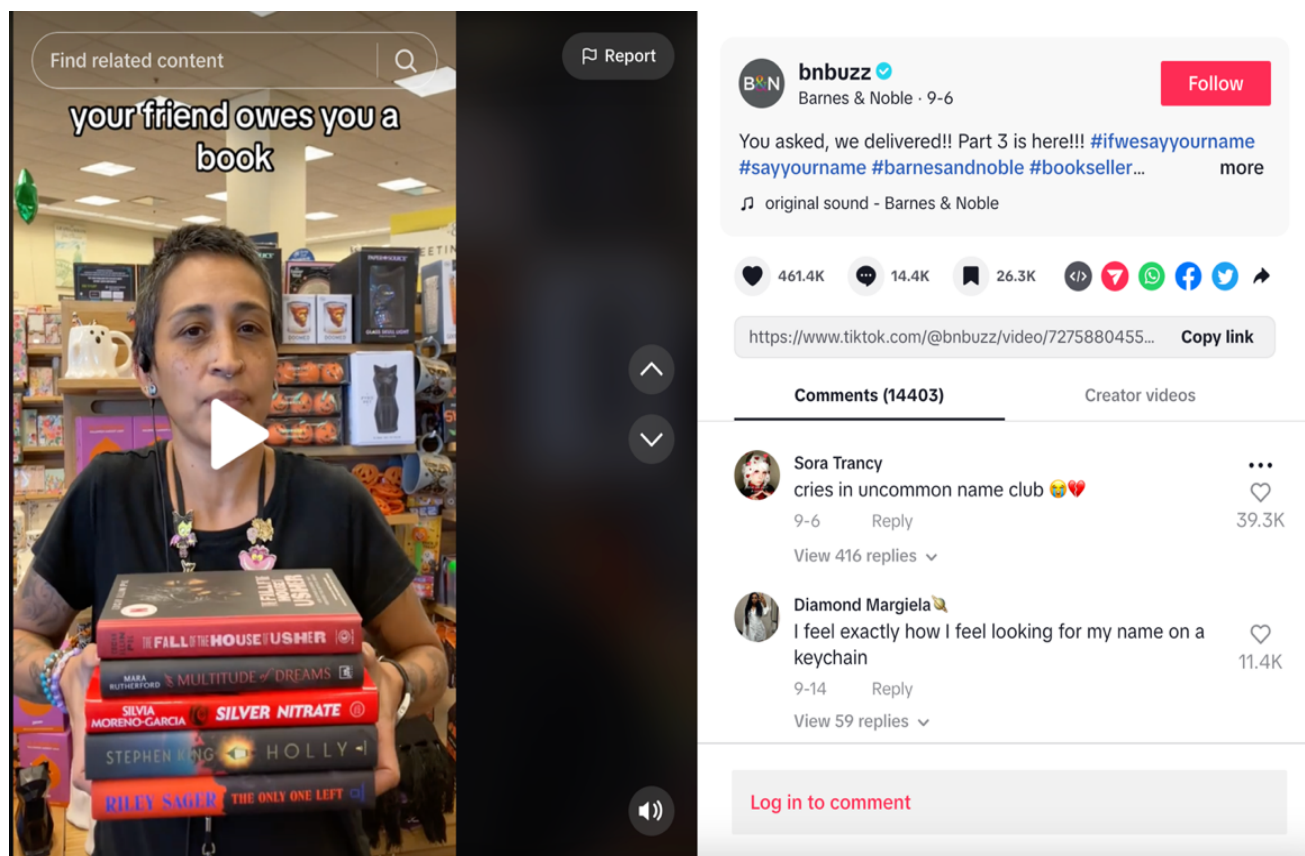


FIGURE 8: VIRAL TIKTOK TREND PART THREE

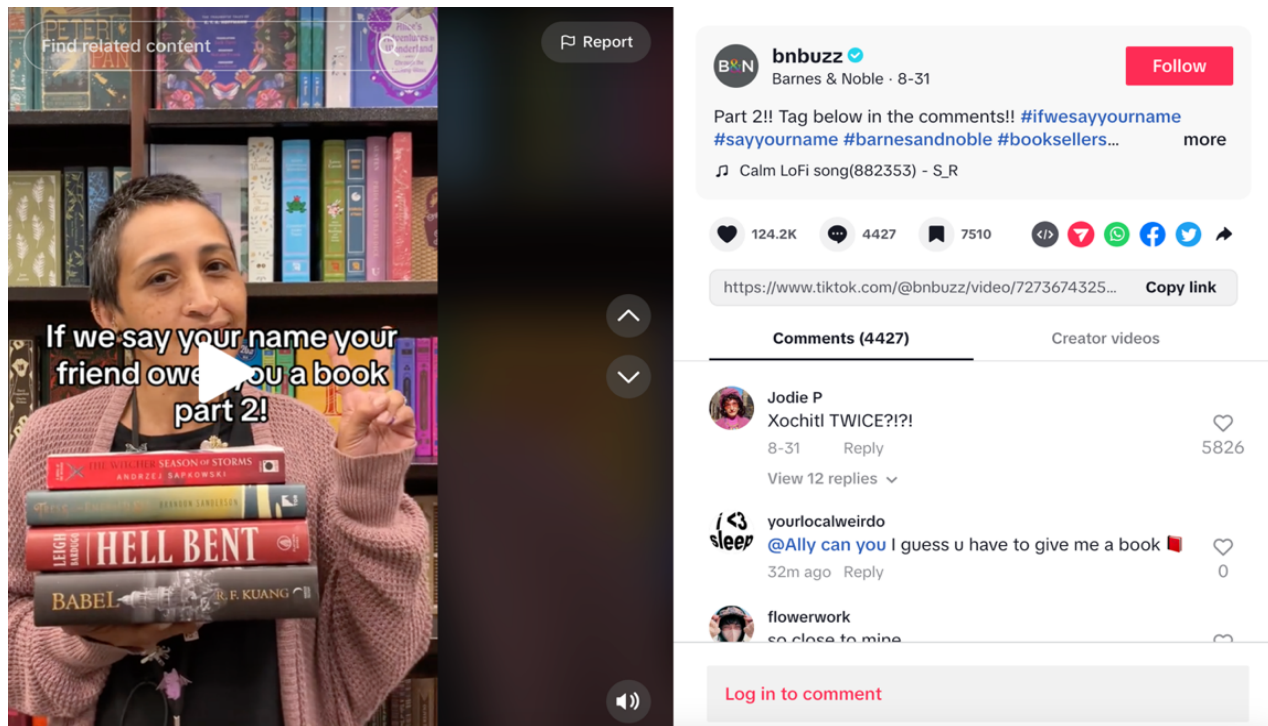


FIGURE 9: VIRAL TIKTOK TREND PART TWO



FIGURE 10: COMMENTS ON VIRAL BARNES & NOBLE TIKTOK

Key Finding #2 – A variation of #BookTok was included in half of all captions.

In addition to the original #BookTok, 26 of the 52 videos posted within the past month included tags that are niche and apply to more specific categories of the BookTok community. Examples include #horrorbooktok, #fantasybooktok, #bnbooktok, #yabooktok, and more. Including one of these hashtags in half of all posts illustrates how big of an impact #BookTok makes on Barnes & Noble's TikTok platform. It is also worth mentioning that other posts feature hashtags of tropes made popular by the BookTok community, such as #enemiestolovers, #secondchanceromance, and #grumpyandusnshine. While these tags don't specifically mention BookTok, they are still related to the group and are used as a means of categorizing and advertising videos.

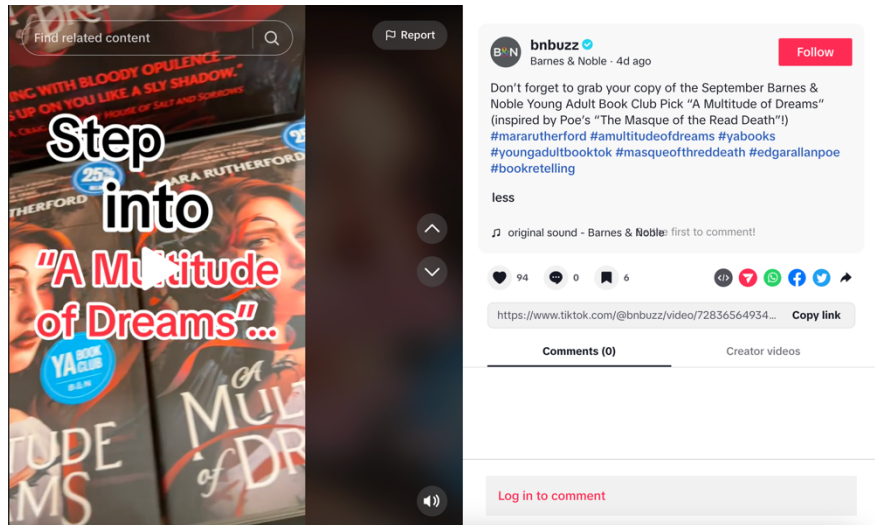


FIGURE 11: TIKTOK WITH LOW ENGAGEMENT

Using a hashtag related to #BookTok does not guarantee that a video will generate a mass number of views. For example, a video posted on September 28 with #yabooks and #youngadultbooktok in the caption received only 1,226 views and 94 likes, making it the least-engaged-with post over the past month (see Figure 11).

Instead, using trending audio tracks and understanding video trends are really the driving forces behind increasing engagement. Colleen Hoover's stand-alone novel Verity is extremely popular on #BookTok, and there was a video posted about it that received 19,000 views. A trending audio that has been used over 136,000 times in the app was used as the background audio for this post, contributing to the higher engagement. Posting videos of books made popular by #BookTok seems to be a common trend and shows how Barnes & Noble is leveraging #BookTok for advertising purposes.

Key Finding #3 - No comment replies.

Barnes & Noble never engages with its users in the comments, which sometimes results in a dry and empty comment section. One post received only three

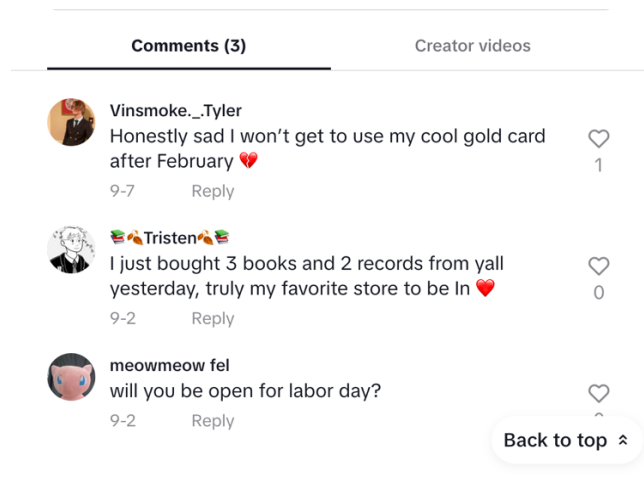


FIGURE 12: WEAK COMMENT SECTION

comments, one of which was a question and the other two were personal statements (see Figure 12). Comments are especially sparse on the posts that do not go viral. Engaging with viewers, whether it be answering questions posed in the comments or replying to reactions, could be a way to encourage more interaction from the audience.

Amazon Books - Instagram (@amazonbooks)

Amazon Books has 158,504 followers on Instagram and is following 211 accounts. In total, this company has 848 posts, 11 of which were posted within the past month. These 11 posts received an engagement total of 24,451 likes and 3,992 comments, which is less than Barnes & Noble's average by approximately 251,600 likes and comments. Although down 14% from the prior period, Amazon Books still has a 1.67% engagement rate for its 11 most recent posts, which is 0.68% more than Barnes & Noble's average. Amazon Books used hashtags with 9.09% of its posts within the past 30 days and posted fewer than two times per week. On average, this company received 1,618.44 likes and 252.69 comments per post. Instagram reels are the most common post type for this company; however, photos generate the highest engagement rate at 1.56% per follower. The best time for Amazon Books to post content is at 9 a.m. MST.

Key Finding #1 - A social media giveaway dominated engagement.

The post that received the most likes in the past 30 days featured a giveaway for three Colleen Hoover books in a boxed set (see Figure 13). The instructions for how to win this giveaway included commenting on the post and following the account. Receiving 20,579 likes and 3,879 comments, this post outdid all the others in terms of audience engagement. This post alone achieved a 15.7% engagement rate per follower.



FIGURE 13: COLLEEN HOOVER BOXED SET INSTAGRAM POST

Amazon Books partnered with author Colleen Hoover for this post, meaning her followers saw this post as well. This partnership broadened the amount of people who could see and interact with this post, which could contribute to why it received the highest engagement levels out of all posts within the past month.

Key Finding #2 - Posting creative Instagram Reels is successful.

Amazon Books does not have a TikTok account, but its second most-liked post in the past month was an Instagram reel in the style of a TikTok that featured a list of books that will soon be adapted as screenplays (see Figure 14). The post received 2,350 likes and 44 comments. This reel, created in a TikTok style, drove audience

engagement on Amazon Books' Instagram, which could also mean that creating a TikTok account as a popular book retailer is important for maximizing engagement.

In the caption, Amazon Books encouraged users to react and comment with which

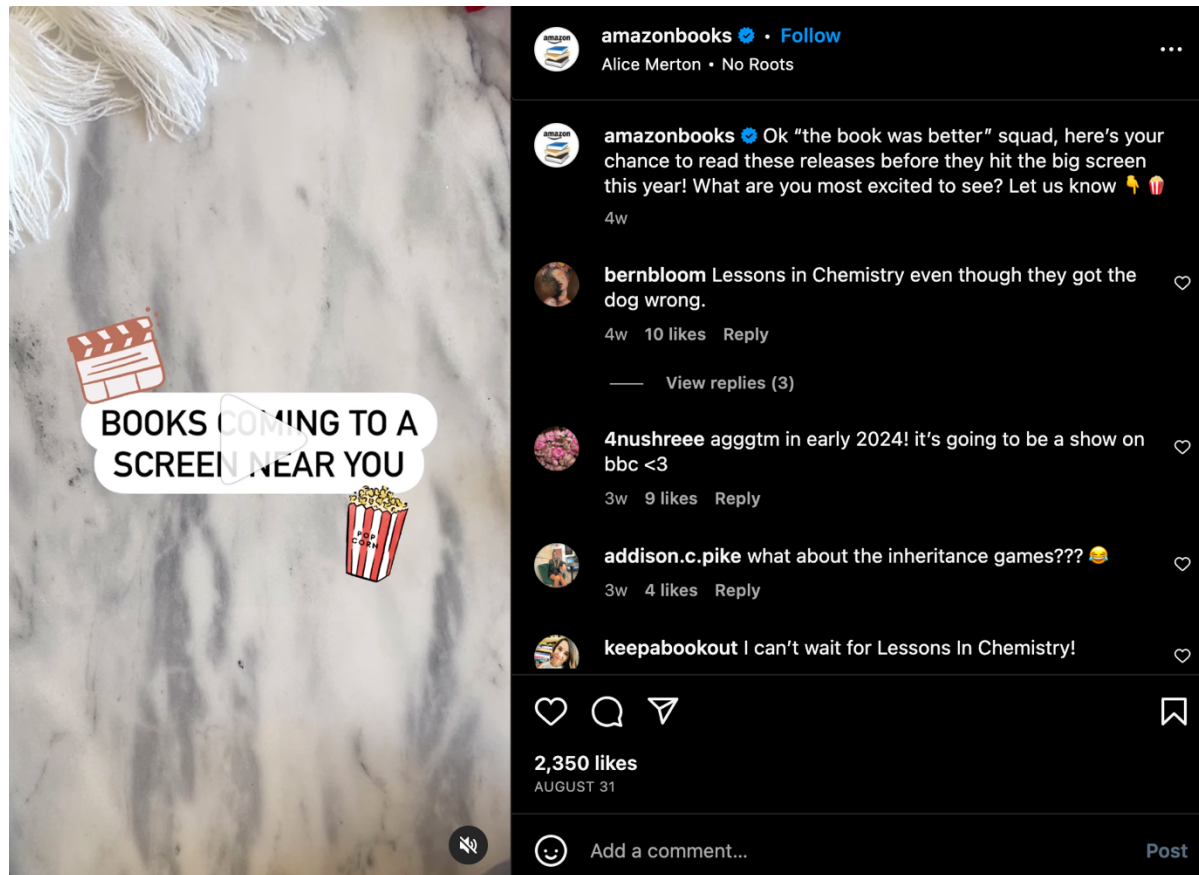


FIGURE 14: AMAZON BOOKS INSTAGRAM REEL

screenplay they are most excited to see. This tactic is not usually used by this company, as the captions oftentimes only describe what is happening in a reel or video. However, this simple action gave viewers an opportunity to participate in the conversation which ultimately increased audience engagement. These posts are lighthearted and informative, but they are more straightforward and not as comedic as most of Barnes & Noble's Instagram posts.

Amazon Books - X (@amazonbooks)

Amazon Books has 433,920 followers on X and is following 898 accounts. In total, the account has 13,080 tweets, 9 of which were posted within the past 30 days. The

engagement rate of these tweets is 0.010%, which is an 8.39% increase from the prior period. Amazon Books received 397 total retweets, likes, and replies on the 9 tweets that were posted, and the top tweet earned 2.1 times more engagement than the top tweet from last period. The average number of likes for a tweet is 21.9, and the average number of comments is 15.8.

Key Finding #1 – Amazon Books utilizes a formal tone on X but may benefit from a more lighthearted tone.

The tone of almost all tweets posted in the past 30 days was very factual, informational, and formal. For example, many of the posts contain well-written sentences promoting authors or books (see Figure 15), but these longer, more thorough tweets tend to have fewer likes than the average. The top-liked tweet was shorter and more casual than the rest, and it posed the question, “So what are we all staying up late reading tonight?” X is known to be an informal and personal social media platform. Because this tweet reflected these qualities, it received 65 likes, 65 comments, and 15 retweets, making it the top-liked post of the period (see Figure 16). This tweet also encouraged users to comment instead of strictly explaining information or promoting a book (see Figure 17).

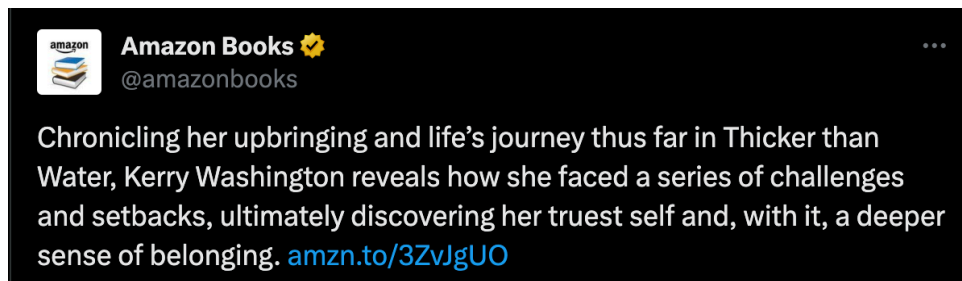


FIGURE 15: TWEET DESCRIBING BOOK



FIGURE 16: TOP-LIKED AMAZON BOOKS TWEET



FIGURE 17: AMAZON BOOKS COMMENT SECTION

Key Finding #2 - More than half the tweets included a photo, and a “new release” template was successful.

While X is known for its text-based posts, Amazon Books included a multimedia element in five (55.6%) of its nine tweets for the past month. Out of the posts with pictures, the one that received the most engagement was promoting the book Sun House by David James Duncan. The caption of this tweet gave a brief description of what the book is about. Attached below the tweet was a bright, colorful graphic displaying the book cover (see Figure 18). This post received 23 likes, 20 retweets, and 19 replies with an engagement rate of 0.014% per follower. Amazon Books has

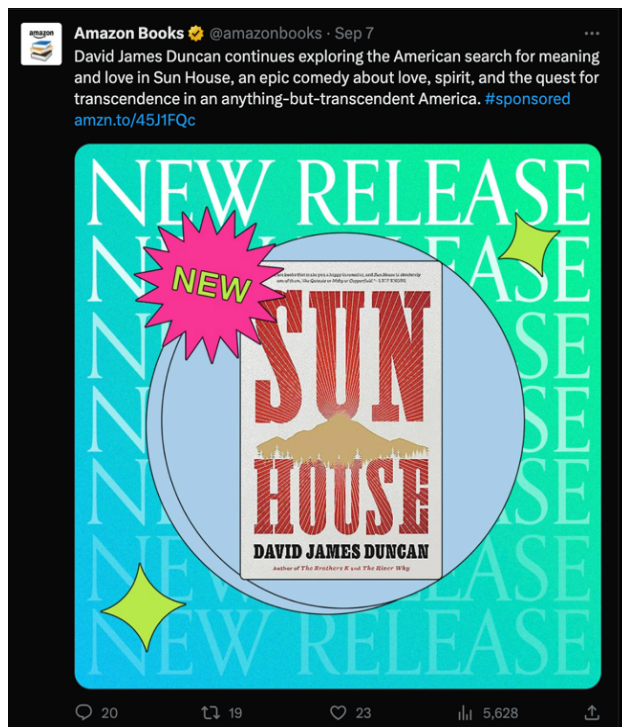


FIGURE 18: TWEET ADVERTISING BOOK WITH GRAPHIC

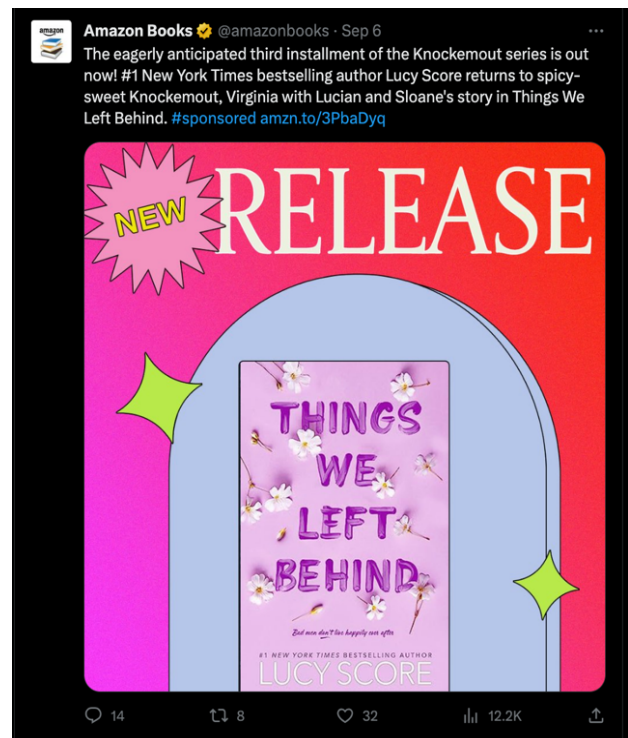


FIGURE 19: GRAPHIC ADVERTISING NEW BOOK ON TWITTER

used the “New Release” template before but switches up colors and fonts to add versatility and visual excitement. Another “New Release” tweet posted on September 6 was the fourth most-engaged-with tweet in the past month, receiving 32 likes, 8 retweets, and 14 comments (see Figure 19).

Traditional Media

Barnes & Noble

According to a search conducted on Muck Rack, Barnes & Noble appeared in 20,558 articles from August 30, 2023 to September 28, 2023. Filters provided by Muck Rack were used to narrow down this information, resulting in 130 articles with the most pertinent information. These articles are all online and from verified outlets, have the company name in the headline, written in English, and have a 65-100 domain authority. Of the 130 articles, 42 are unique. Two journalists have shared a link to one or more of these articles on Twitter, exposing these articles to approximately 833,730 people who follow these journalists. Muck Rack tracked the total engagement achieved by these articles on social media and found that the links were shared, commented on, or liked 1,863 times. Benzinga, a financial news outlet, posted 14 articles about Barnes & Noble during the past month. Following close

behind is Yahoo Finance with 6 articles and Seeking Alpha with 3 articles. Muck Rack states that the sentiment for all articles posted during this time is 100% positive.

Key Finding #1 – Articles positively touch on Barnes & Noble’s financial results.

Nineteen articles, excluding duplicates, were written about Barnes & Noble Education and its most recent quarterly report, as well as its announcement for financial statements that will be released in 2024. One article from Seeking Alpha has the title “Barnes & Noble rises because sometimes less is more” and describes the growth the company has made despite having fewer stores than in years prior (see Figure 20). This article received approximately 6.6 million website visits within the past month. Considering that Barnes & Noble was consistently losing money and reporting losses just over five years ago, achieving this status with the media illustrates how far the company has come to make major improvements and re-center priorities. The tone of the articles covering Barnes & Noble’s financial growth for the past quarter is acclamatory and informative.

Barnes & Noble rises because sometimes less is more

Sep. 06, 2023 10:38 AM ET | **Barnes & Noble Education, Inc. (BNED)** | By: Christiana Sciaudone, SA News Editor



Kobus Louw/E+ via Getty Images

FIGURE 20: ARTICLE DESCRIBING BARNES & NOBLE'S FINANCIALS

Key Finding #2 - Media coverage centered around promoting new stores and items.

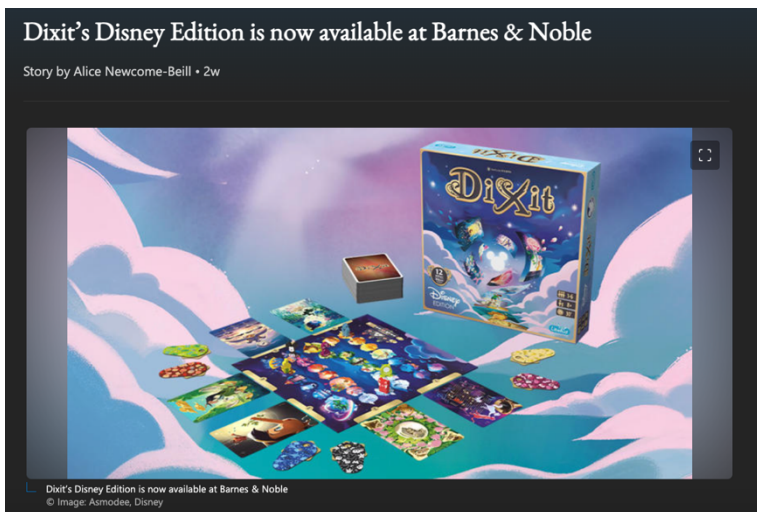


FIGURE 21: ARTICLE ANNOUNCING NEW DISNEY PRODUCT

Media coverage also revolved around new products or store locations, illustrating Barnes & Noble to be an exciting and spontaneous company. One article featured on Polygon reached 142,877,153 total visits and announced the launch of a new Disney product exclusively available at Barnes & Noble (see Figure 21). As mentioned in the lead-in of the article, the fact that this product is available at Barnes & Noble

shows how the company is developing partnerships and deals that benefit its audience and provide exclusive opportunities. Another article posted on Patch celebrated the re-opening of a Barnes & Noble store that closed during the COVID-19 pandemic (see Figure 22). The content in this article describes Barnes & Noble's re-opening to be a sign of growth, revitalization, and promise for both the company and businesses in the Promenade area.

Officials Celebrate Promenade's Renaissance With Barnes & Noble Return

After a five-year hiatus spurred on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the bookseller's return serves as a symbol of revitalization for Promenade.



Rachel Barnes, Patch Staff

Posted Wed, Sep 20, 2023 at 10:59 am PT

Reply (1)



FIGURE 22: ARTICLE CELEBRATING BARNES & NOBLE STORE

Amazon Books

The number of articles that mentioned "Amazon Books" in the past month is 70,341.

Filters provided by Muck Rack were used to narrow down this information, resulting in 166 articles with the most pertinent information. These articles are all online and

from verified outlets, have the company name in the headline, written in English, and have a 65-100 domain authority. Of the 166 articles, 45 are unique. In total, a link to one or more of these articles was shared, commented on, or liked on a social media platform 17,514 times. On average, a link to one of these articles received 105 shares, comments, or likes. Fifty journalists shared one or more of these links on X, which allowed for the combined 2.2 million followers of these journalists to be exposed to this content. The sentiment for Amazon Books' media coverage is 59.4% negative, 35.2% positive, and 5.5% neutral, according to Muck Rack.

Key Finding #1 - Most negative media coverage stems from problems with AI.

Amazon is facing severe backlash from the media from selling books that are authored by artificial intelligence bots without complete transparency to the consumer. An article posted on WIRED Magazine that received 10 shares from journalists on X explained that Amazon could simply flag these books to fix the problem (see Figure 23).

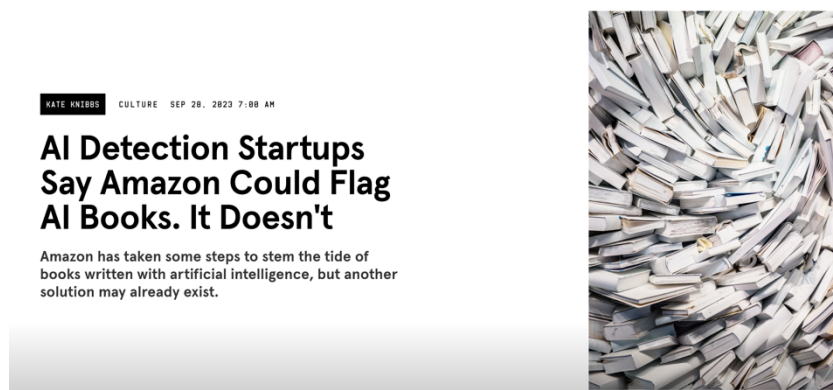


FIGURE 23: ARTICLE FROM WIRED MAGAZINE

The two articles that earned the highest engagement in the past month at 142,877,153 link visits for both articles expressed negative concerns about how Amazon is engaging with AI. The first article posted on The Register states how Amazon is falsely

protecting consumers by limiting author-bots while failing to pinpoint the real problem (see Figure 24). This is a popular subject among media articles, as 21 of the 45 unique articles involve the topic of limiting AI authors. The second article from the news outlet Breitbart specifies a concern to human safety, which amplifies a perturbed and dismayed tone (see Figure 25).

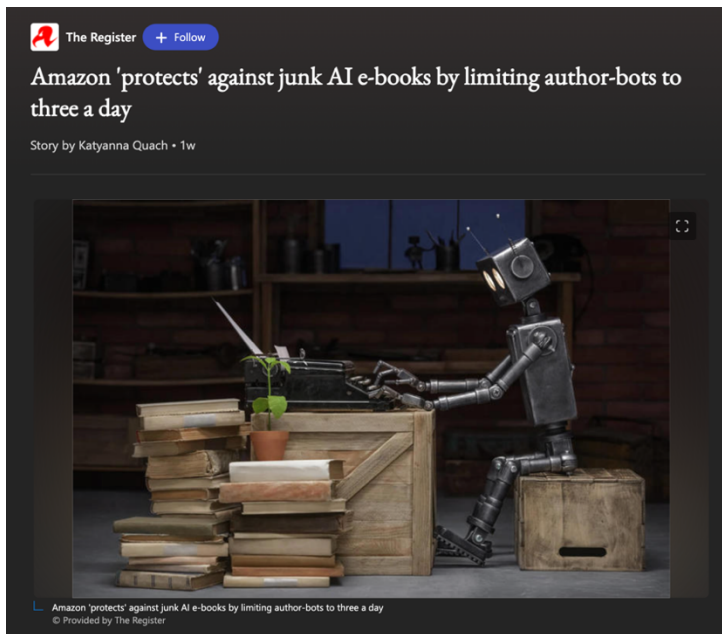


FIGURE 24: ARTICLE FROM THE REGISTER



FIGURE 25: ARTICLE FROM BREITBART

Key Finding #2 - One positive article stuck out from the rest.

An article titled “15 Celebrity Narrated Amazon Audible Books You Don’t Want to Miss” that was posted on Country Living reached slightly over 14 million total link visits. The tone of this piece is complimentary and commending, a stark contrast to the negative media coverage listed above. The article lists 15 Audible books that it portrays as superbly narrated. It makes sure to list Amazon as the owner of Audible, which displays Amazon Books as a large, innovative platform that offers exclusive book features.

Competitor Analysis

Competitor Analysis August 30, 2023 - September 28, 2023	Barnes & Noble	Amazon Books
Facebook		
Total number of followers	1,800,000	N/A
Total number of page likes	1,904,197	665,295
Average number of posts per day	2.1	0.23
Number of posts during 30-day research period	65	7

Average number of engagement (likes, comments, and shares) per post	167.7	40.9
Average number of comments per post	9.3	10.6
Average number of likes per post	141.4	27.4
Average engagement rate	0.009%	0.006%
Percentage change of followers in the past 30 days	0.13%	0.1%
Tone of posts	Informative	Explanatory
Instagram		
Total number of followers	871,512	158,504
Average number of posts per day	2.32	0.35
Number of posts during 30-day research period	69	11
Average number of engagement (likes and comments) per post	11,617.9	2,585.7
Average number of comments per post	2.31	252.69
Average number of likes per post	1,023.81	1,618.44
Average engagement rate	1.34%	1.67%
Percentage change of followers in the past 30 days	19.3%	5.22%
Tone of posts	Lively	Inclusive
TikTok		
Total number of followers	173,100	N/A
Total number of views	11,441,772	N/A
Average number of posts per day	1.77	N/A
Number of posts during 30-day research period	52	N/A
Average number of engagement (likes, comments, and shares) per post	15,103	N/A
Average number of comments per post	435.5	N/A
Average number of likes per post	14,207.6	N/A
Average engagement rate	8.89%	N/A
Percentage change of followers in the past 30 days	24.5%	N/A
Tone of posts	Comedic	N/A
X		
Total number of followers	307,887	433,920
Average number of posts per day	0.29	0.29
Number of posts during 30-day research period	9	9
Average number of engagement (likes, comments, and retweets) per post	96.9	44.1
Average number of comments per post	1.8	15.8
Average number of likes per post	80.2	21.9
Average engagement rate	0.031%	0.010%
Percentage change of followers in the past 30 days	0.1%	0.479%
Tone of posts	Casual	Exuberant

YouTube		
Total number of subscribers	26,200	6,430
Total number of video views	5,868	N/A
Average number of posts per week	4	0
Number of posts during 30-day research period	16	0
Average number of engagement (likes and comments) per post	15.4	0
Average number of comments per post	1.4	0
Average number of likes per post	14	0
Average engagement rate	0.059%	0
Percentage change of followers in the past 30 days	1.55%	2.72%
Tone of posts	Enlightening	Exclusive

Conclusion

Across all social media platforms, Barnes & Noble ranks No. 1 in total engagement. Barnes & Noble earned approximately 1.8 million engagement actions across all tracked social channels for the past month, with TikTok being the company's most engaging platform. Amazon Books earned approximately 29,200 cumulative engagement actions for its social platforms. Barnes & Noble's audience is larger by almost 6 million people.

Amazon Books received more negative media coverage than Barnes & Noble, with many articles cynically describing situations regarding artificial intelligence. Barnes & Noble's coverage, which received 100% positive sentiment, centered around financial improvements within the company and new product launches or location openings.

After conducting this communications audit, the team revisited the initial research questions and concluded the following:

How does Barnes & Noble utilize #BookTok to increase engagement?

Barnes & Noble uses #BookTok to increase engagement by using niche hashtags related to the BookTok community that are specific enough to cater to certain audiences. By incorporating these hashtags and creating videos using trending sounds or actions, Barnes & Noble produces content that usually achieves high

engagement. Focusing on trends in the BookTok community, such as popular books or authors, also increases audience engagement.

What kind of Barnes & Noble Instagram posts are the most effective?

The most effective Barnes & Noble Instagram posts are celebrity partnerships or comedic meme content. By partnering with celebrities, Barnes & Noble expands its audience and reaches a larger number of people, which ultimately increases engagement levels. Based on the comments received on Barnes & Noble's Instagram memes, people love this type of content and applaud its creativity, playfulness, and wit.

How is Barnes & Noble being represented in traditional media?

In the media, Barnes & Noble is presented in a very positive light. No negative media coverage was tracked, and articles heavily focused on the company's innovation and recent success.

BARNES & NOBLE

Qualitative Research Report (Report 3)

Introduction

The Barnes & Noble research team conducted a semi-structured interview with one willing participant to gain insight on book-buying habits and perceived trends that occur at Barnes & Noble. As seen in the communications audit, TikTok is Barnes & Noble's most engaging social media platform. To better understand the influence of #BookTok on purchasing decisions, the team asked how the interviewee perceived Barnes & Noble's TikTok account and the social media platform as whole in regard to the book retail industry. This report also holistically examined certain types of Barnes & Noble Instagram and TikTok content to assess the impact of these social channels on consumer purchasing habits. In the client backgrounder, it was noted that Amazon Books is Barnes & Noble's largest competitor and strictly sells books online. Because of this, questions were asked to investigate potential reasons for Generation Z buying books at a physical location as opposed to online.

Research Questions

1. What kind of impact does #BookTok have on a consumer's book purchasing habits?
2. What do consumers feel contribute to a positive, engaging in-store environment in Barnes & Noble stores?
3. How is Barnes & Noble successfully catering to its audience on Instagram and TikTok?

Methodology

The interview occurred on October 10, 2023, and lasted 19 minutes and 42 seconds. Eighteen questions were asked about features in Barnes & Noble store locations, the use of #BookTok in Barnes & Noble stores, and attributes of Barnes & Noble's TikTok and Instagram accounts. A complete list of the interview questions is provided in

Appendix A. The participant consented to the interview being recorded, and the software Otter.ai was used for transcription assistance. The full transcript can be viewed in Appendix B.

Participant Background

The participant was chosen through a screening process that aimed to find a suitable consumer who matched Barnes & Noble's target audience listed in the client backgrounder. The team chose a female college student who enjoys reading and regularly buys books at Barnes & Noble. The interviewee is 21 years old and lives in Tempe, Arizona. She is currently pursuing an undergraduate degree in psychology at Arizona State University. She has enjoyed reading since she was a child and often went to Barnes & Noble with her parents growing up. The participant is an avid TikTok user and has been a part of the #BookTok community since downloading the app. With the growing impact of social media on book-buying, the interviewee perfectly fits the target audience listed in the backgrounder consumer analysis.

Results

After the interview was conducted, the participant's answers were analyzed using a deductive thematic approach. Three main key findings were observed after synthesizing the data.

Key Finding #1 - Promoting books on social media platforms is a crucial communications tactic that influences in-store purchases.

The participant follows Barnes & Noble's TikTok and Instagram accounts and gave examples of her favorite type of content. When employees promote certain books on social media, she retrieves ideas and thoughts on what to buy next. Specifically concerning Instagram posts that feature employee recommendations, she said:

"...I think it just kind of adds a lot of intimacy. You get to know the people that work there, and you get to know the books that they love, and you get to see that they really enjoy working there because they love reading. As a reader, that's nice to see. That's the kind of stuff that I like the most on their Instagram."

Despite the participant mentioning that Instagram has an older, stronger following, she believes that TikTok has the strongest potential for Barnes & Noble marketing and communication.

"...with TikTok, they're able to kind of branch out in terms of what they post to get more engagement or attention. I think it has definitely expanded their horizons in terms of marketing."

She elaborated on this point by explaining that the Barnes & Noble TikTok account features many videos of employees recommending books, sometimes utilizing different trends or video features made popular by #BookTok. She is influenced by this type of content. The participant explained:

"The audience gets to see each of the picks of each employee, and then they choose if they want to buy the book. The TikToks show you where it is in the store, and then the employees tell you a little bit about the book and why they picked it, which influences me to come into the store and buy it. So, I think those videos are the most successful for the TikTok account."

Key Finding #2 - Barnes & Noble uses #BookTok to promote a wide array of books and broaden consumers' perspectives when shopping.

The interviewee has been a part of the #BookTok community since downloading TikTok and mentioned that the platform allows her to find new books and genres she enjoys. One of the steps in her book-buying process includes forming a list of books she has recently seen, and #BookTok is a channel she uses to search for new possibilities. She explains:

"The #BookTok community definitely opens up my horizons in terms of genres, or even just more books in the genres that I really like ... I just learn more about what kinds of books are out there and what stories people enjoy. I tend to gravitate towards those."

Barnes & Noble's TikTok account also creates videos with trends made popular on #BookTok, which captures the participant's attention and engagement. By using these trends to promote books on TikTok, Barnes & Noble increases the interviewee's awareness of popular #BookTok books which could contribute to her overall book purchasing habits.

"I think that there's a lot of trends that were created at first by people who were on #BookTok. Trends like the 'if you like this, then maybe you'd like this' kind of stuff. I think it started with #BookTok, and then it kind of gave the Barnes & Noble TikTok a platform to try those things. And then they were able to get engagement because those trends are popular on #BookTok, and they were able to integrate those trends into their content."

Barnes & Noble leverages this unique feature of #BookTok by implementing in-store #BookTok stands that promote popular books. To the participant, these stands are a catalyst for book exploration and connection to other #BookTok users.

"If I see a book on a #BookTok stand that I have also seen on TikTok, I am more influenced to buy it. And if I see a book on the stand that I haven't already seen on TikTok, I guess that just kind of tells me that people in my area are reading that book and people that shop in the Barnes & Noble I shop in like that book. So, I think it's just kind of like the crowd dynamic of knowing that other people like it, so I would also like to read it and hopefully like it."

Key Finding #3 - Familiar store features and non-book products contribute to a consumer's willingness to purchase a book in-person.

The participant prefers buying books in-person as opposed to online because the aesthetic of a book is important to her, such as knowing "how big it's going to be or what the cover and the pages feel like." That being said, the feature she enjoys most about shopping in-person at Barnes & Noble is the familiarity of her local store on Val Vista Drive in Mesa, Arizona. Each Barnes & Noble is set up a little differently to represent the feeling of a local bookstore.

"I really enjoy the format of that Barnes & Noble. It just is familiar to me. They have the shelves and the genres in places that just make sense to me. But I would say the familiarity of it is what gets me the most."

She also mentioned that the products Barnes & Noble sells that are not books contribute to how this company stands out compared to other book retailers. The participant said that items such as sticky notes, tote bags, action figures, and puzzles can cater to multiple different audiences and draw more people in.

"When you walk into Barnes & Noble, obviously the main attraction is the books. But you tend to see lots of other things that are book-related ... they just have an

appealing layout and display that is easy for people to gravitate toward, so I think that's how they set themselves apart in terms of what they sell at their stores."

Other attributes such as the Barnes & Noble café have influenced the participant's in-person book purchasing habits. She explained that this area can "cause you to maybe stay in the store a little bit longer or cause you to browse a little bit more than you thought you would."

According to the participant, the café "definitely adds a layer of coziness to the whole experience."

Overall, the participant said that the featured non-book products in stores contributes to her going in-person to buy a book because there is a lot to see and lots of items that she enjoys.

Limitations

This interview features the opinions of one person, which limits the ability to generalize these findings to other Barnes & Noble shoppers. The interview was conducted over the phone, which eradicated the ability to read and interpret the participant's body language. The interviewer had met the participant prior to this interview, which could have led to skewed or biased answers.

Conclusion

The aim of this report was to gather qualitative data from an interview conducted with a Barnes & Noble shopper who enjoys reading.

After conducting this interview, the team revisited the initial research questions and concluded the following:

What kind of impact does #BookTok have on a consumer's book purchasing habits?

The participant informed the team that by creating TikTok videos using #BookTok trends and by implementing #BookTok stands in stores, she feels as though Barnes & Noble widens her horizons in terms of seeing and buying books.

What do consumers feel contribute to a positive, engaging in-store environment in Barnes & Noble stores?

This interview illustrated that the products offered that are not books create a welcoming, diverse environment, and added features such as the café contribute to a better in-person book-buying experience.

How is Barnes & Noble successfully catering to its audience on Instagram and TikTok?

This report revealed that content featuring book recommendations from employees on TikTok or Instagram cater to the participant due to the personal and honest nature of the posts.

Following this report, the research team will conduct a quantitative survey that will collect more generalizable findings surrounding consumer book purchasing habits at Barnes & Noble. More specifically, the survey will evaluate the impact of consumer exposure to in-store #BookTok stands and the effects of TikTok on the book retail industry.

BARNES & NOBLE

Survey Research Report (Report 4)

Introduction

The Barnes & Noble research team conducted an online survey to better understand the impact of social media and #BookTok on in-store consumer book-purchasing decisions. The purpose of this research was to identify how social media, particularly TikTok, can influence consumer book-buying habits. This survey also provided data concerning why Generation Z is motivated to purchase books either online or in-person. As seen in Report 3, various factors contributed to the interviewee's in-person book-buying experience, such as non-book products and localized store layouts. Questions regarding purchasing preferences were included in this survey in attempts to generalize past findings and/or gather more information regarding the in-person or online book-buying experience. From a communications standpoint, this survey examined how and why Barnes & Noble is involved with the popular #BookTok community and how important social media can be when advertising book products. While Report 2 demonstrated strengths and weaknesses of Barnes & Noble's social media channels, this report aimed to gather a general consensus regarding TikTok's significance in the book retail industry. In accordance with the research team's previous reports, three research questions for this survey were formed.

Research Questions

1. How strongly does Barnes & Noble leverage the success of #BookTok to obtain in-store exposure?
2. How does TikTok influence Generation Z purchasing decisions in the book retail industry?
3. Which factors contribute to Generation Z purchasing a book either in-person or online?

Methodology

A 25-question survey about Barnes & Noble was conducted using Qualtrics. The first page featured a consent form, and once completed, participants were taken to the survey questions. Display and skip logic were placed on certain questions to ensure that the team was retrieving the most accurate information. Because of this, sample sizes for individual questions may vary. This survey also featured two screener questions that asked, "Have you purchased a book from Barnes & Noble in the past year?" and "How old are you?" to ensure...

The first block of the survey (Q2 - Q11) asked participants whether they follow Barnes & Noble social media accounts and how important they think social media is for advertising and promoting book products. The second section (Q12 - Q21) gathered data on participants' interactions with TikTok and focused on Barnes & Noble's involvement with #BookTok. The last block of the survey (Q22 - Q25) collected information on participants' willingness to purchase books online or in-person. The final question of this survey asked participants what gender they identify as. A full list of the survey questions can be found in Appendix C.

Sample Description

This survey, available from Oct. 29 - Oct. 30, 2023, sampled members of Generation Z and received 59 responses from 18 - 24-year-olds who have purchased a book from Barnes & Noble in the past year. After the two screener questions, 57 respondents continued with the survey. Participants were recruited via Instagram where the link was posted for 24 hours. Approximately 76.9% of participants were female, while 19.2% were male. Because of the age parameters for this survey, 100% of participants were between the ages of 18 - 24. See Figure 26 for complete sample demographics.

Figure 26: Demographics (n=57)

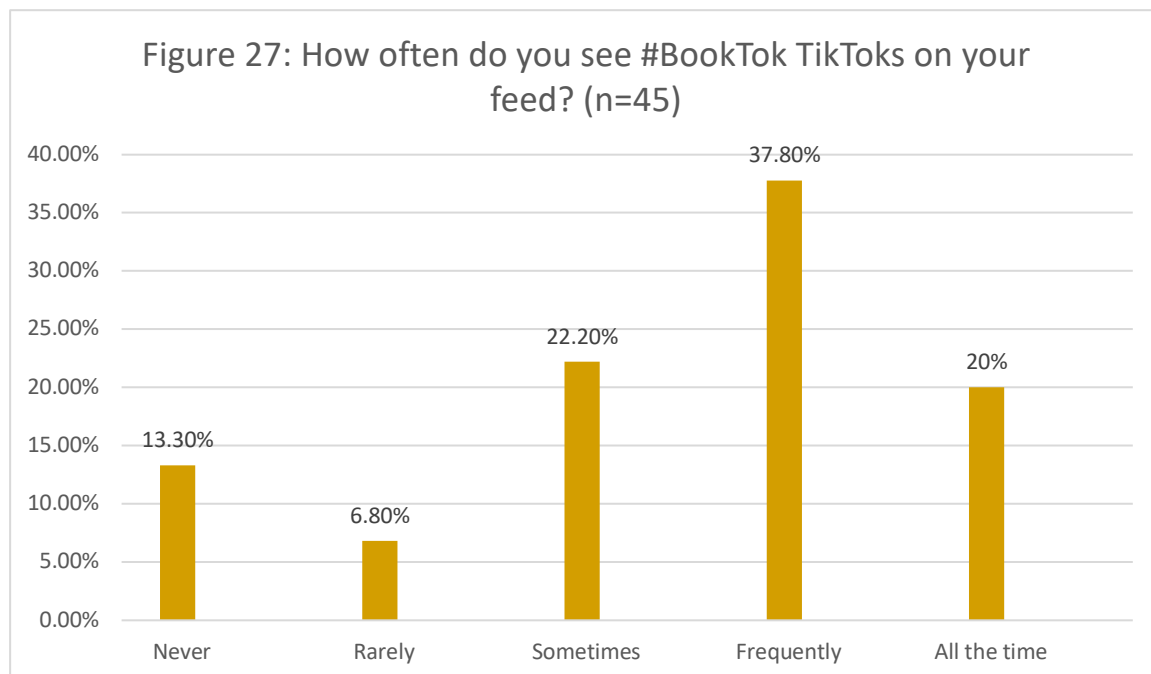
Demographics	Percent of Sample
Gender	
Male	19.23%
Female	76.92%
Non-Binary / Third Gender	1.92%

Prefer Not to Say	1.92%
Prefer to self-describe	0%
Age	
Under 18	0%
18-24	100%
25-34	0%
35-44	0%
45-54	0%
55-64	0%
65+	0%

Results

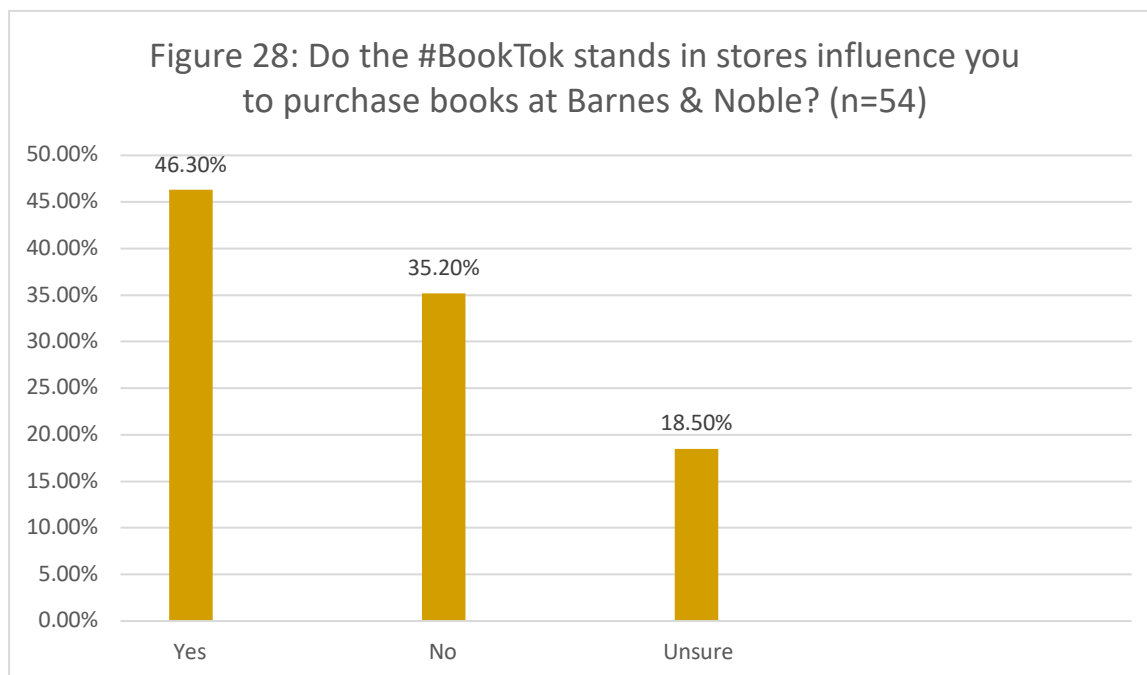
The popularity of #BookTok is significant to Barnes & Noble’s in-store stands and consumer purchasing decisions.

When asked whether participants have ever heard of #BookTok, 92.6% responded yes, while only 7.4% said no. The survey then asked respondents how often they see #BookTok videos on their TikTok feed. The majority of participants reflect that they are well-aware of the #BookTok community, and 37.7% of respondents said they see #BookTok videos frequently. See Figure 27 for a full list of responses.



To determine the credibility and reliability of #BookTok among survey respondents, a question was asked regarding whether or not #BookTok is a good way to find new books to read. In response, 37.5% of participants strongly agreed, and 37.5% of participants agreed, meaning 75% of respondents consider #BookTok a good way to find new reading suggestions. This data illustrates the prevalence of #BookTok and its importance to Barnes & Noble consumers.

When asked whether or not participants have ever purchased a book from a #BookTok stand, 48.2% of survey respondents said yes, and 51.9% said no. Although more participants have not purchased a book from a #BookTok stand than those who have, 46.3% of survey respondents believe that these stands have still influenced them to purchase a book in-store. On the flip side, 35.2% of participants said they are not influenced by these stands, and 18.5% were unsure (see Figure 28). These stands appear to be important factors in influencing consumer purchasing decisions and allowing Barnes & Noble to display the most relevant content.



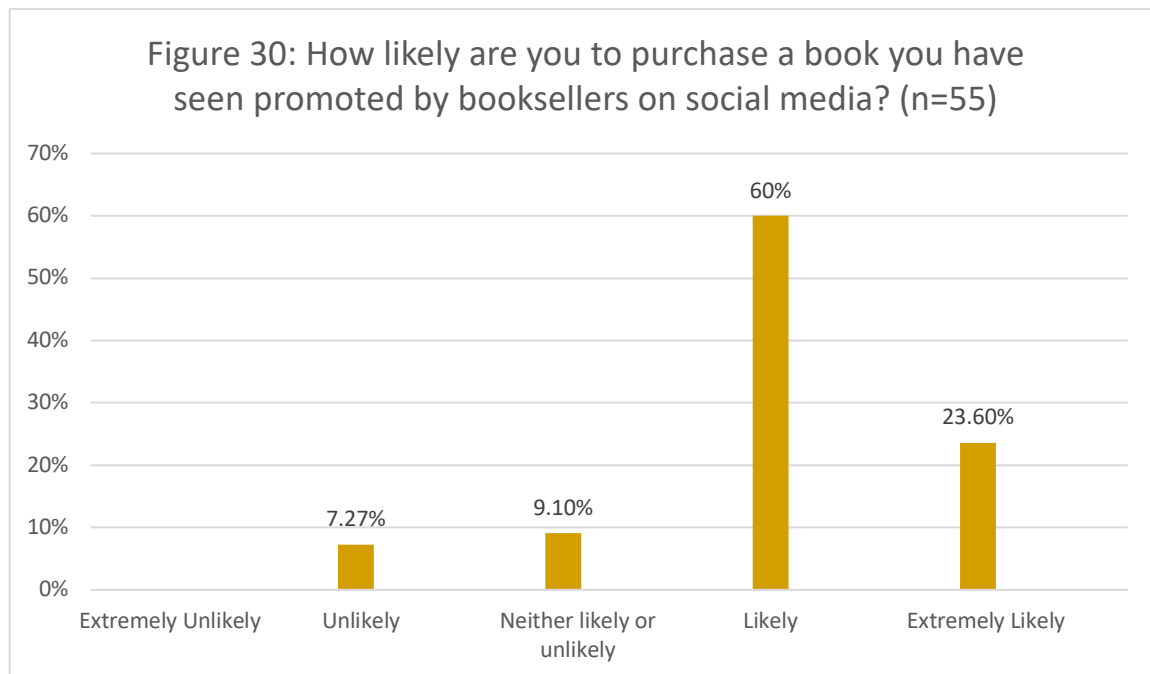
Of the people who have purchased a book from a #BookTok stand at Barnes & Noble, 92.3% say that the stands add relevance to the store. Of the people who have never bought a book from a #BookTok stand, 74.1% still think that the stands are pertinent displays for Barnes & Noble to have (See Figure 29). As learned in the interview from Report 3, implementing #BookTok stands allows readers to explore new books and genres that are trending on TikTok. Since the majority of respondents can agree that these stands add relevance to Barnes & Noble stores, these stands can constantly serve as current, reliable sources for popular, purchase-worthy #BookTok books.

Figure 29: Cross Tabulation of respondents who have purchased a book from a #BookTok stand and those who believe the stands add relevance (n=54)

Do you believe the #BookTok stands add relevance to Barnes & Noble's book displays?	Have you ever purchased a book from a #BookTok stand at a Barnes & Noble?		
		Yes	No
	Yes	92.3%	74.1%
	No	3.8%	14.8%
	Unsure	3.8%	11.1%

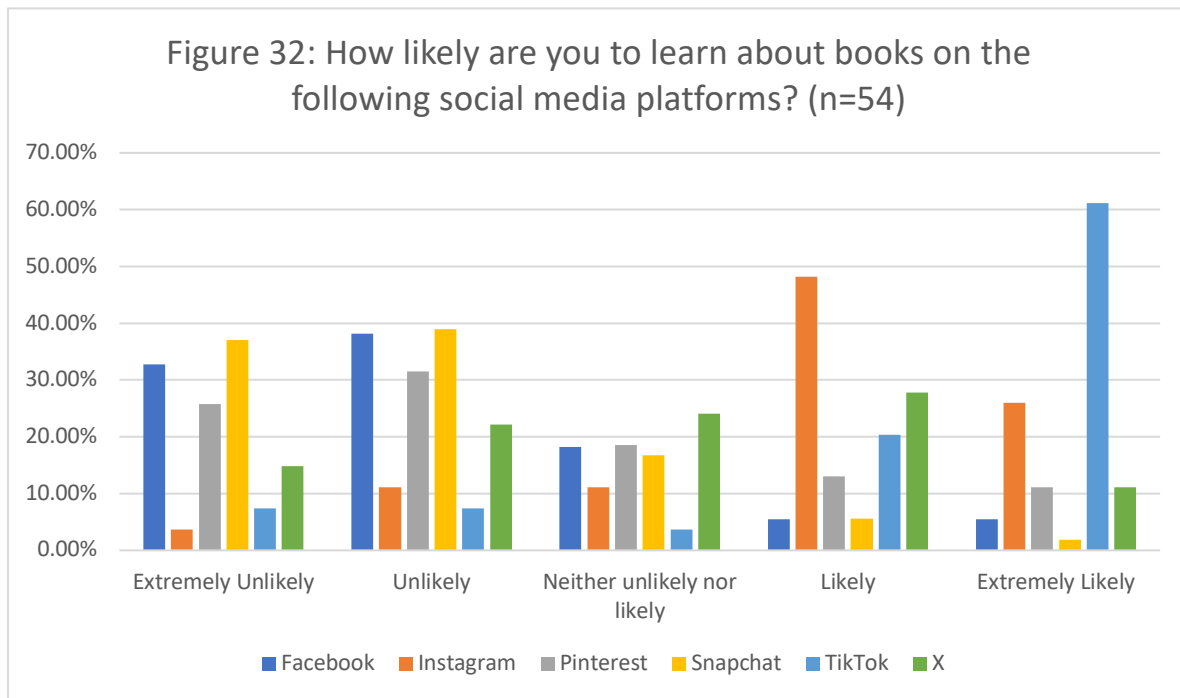
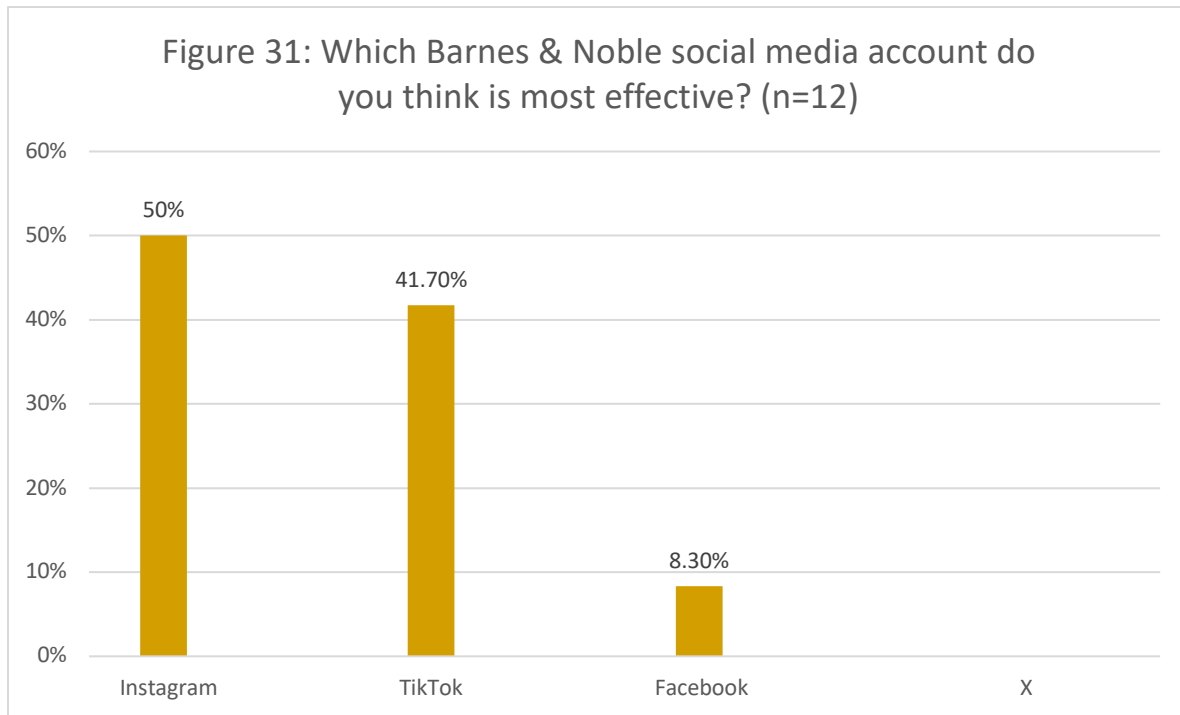
Participants believe that TikTok is the most influential social media platform for promoting and advertising books.

Before any questions were asked about specific social media platforms, data was gathered on how likely respondents are to purchase a book that is advertised on social media. Data showed that 60% of participants are likely to purchase an advertised book, and 23.6% are extremely likely (See Figure 30). In total, over 83% of responses note the positive impact of social media on bookselling.



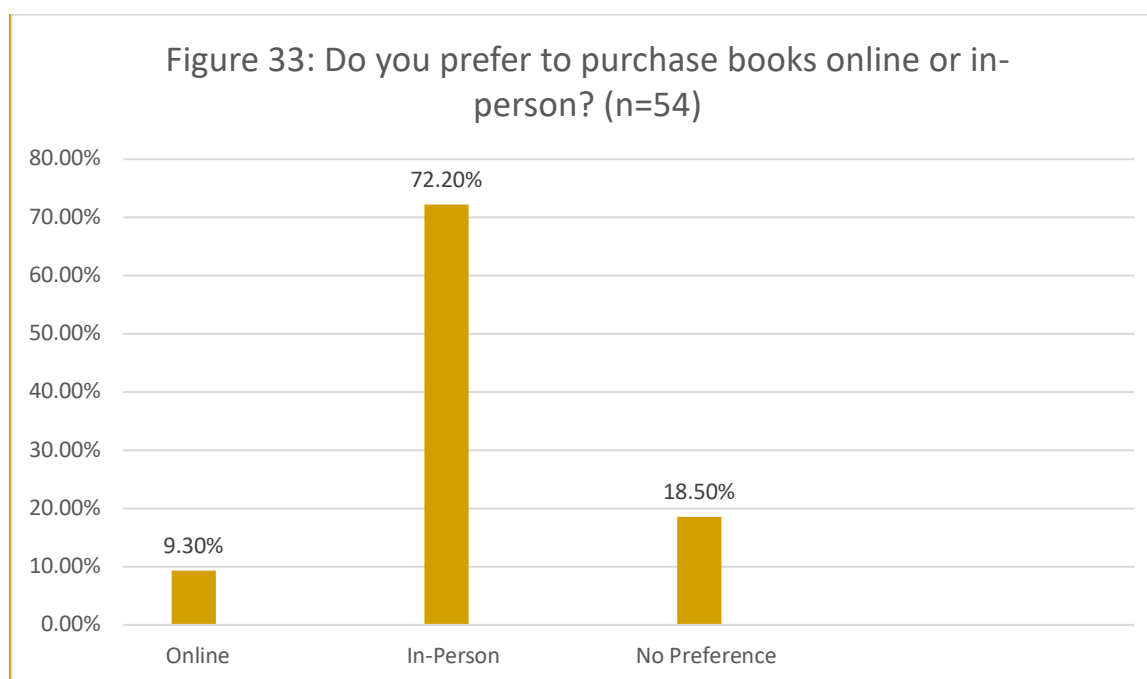
Participants were asked whether TikTok has ever influenced them to purchase a book, and 79.6% of respondents said yes, while 20.5% said no. In the communications audit, it was found that over half of the videos posted on Barnes & Noble's TikTok account in a span of 30 days featured a variation of the hashtag #BookTok in all captions. Because this community is so prevalent on TikTok, Barnes & Noble takes opportunities to connect its consumer base with #BookTok in hopes of influencing book-purchasing habits.

Despite Barnes & Noble's presence on TikTok, 50% of respondents reported that they think Instagram is the company's most effective social media account. TikTok followed close behind garnering 41.7% of responses (See Figure 31). As discovered in the interview and audit, the Barnes & Noble Instagram features personable content that reaches high levels of engagement. It was also discovered that while Instagram may have an older, stronger following, TikTok still has greatest potential for promoting books and gaining new audiences from a communications standpoint, as illustrated from this survey. For instance, 61.1% of participants said that they are extremely likely to learn about books on TikTok, compared to 25.9% of respondents who said they are extremely likely to learn about books on Instagram. See Figure 32 for a full list of participants' answers involving all social media platforms.



The majority of respondents prefer to purchase books in-person.

When asked where participants prefer to buy books, 72.2% reported that they prefer to purchase books in-person. In comparison, 18.5% stated that they have no preference and only 9.3% said they prefer online (See Figure 33).



After answering this question, respondents were prompted to state the reasoning for their answers. Participants were allowed to pick multiple answers, allowing for more responses to be reflected than what is shown in the actual sample size.

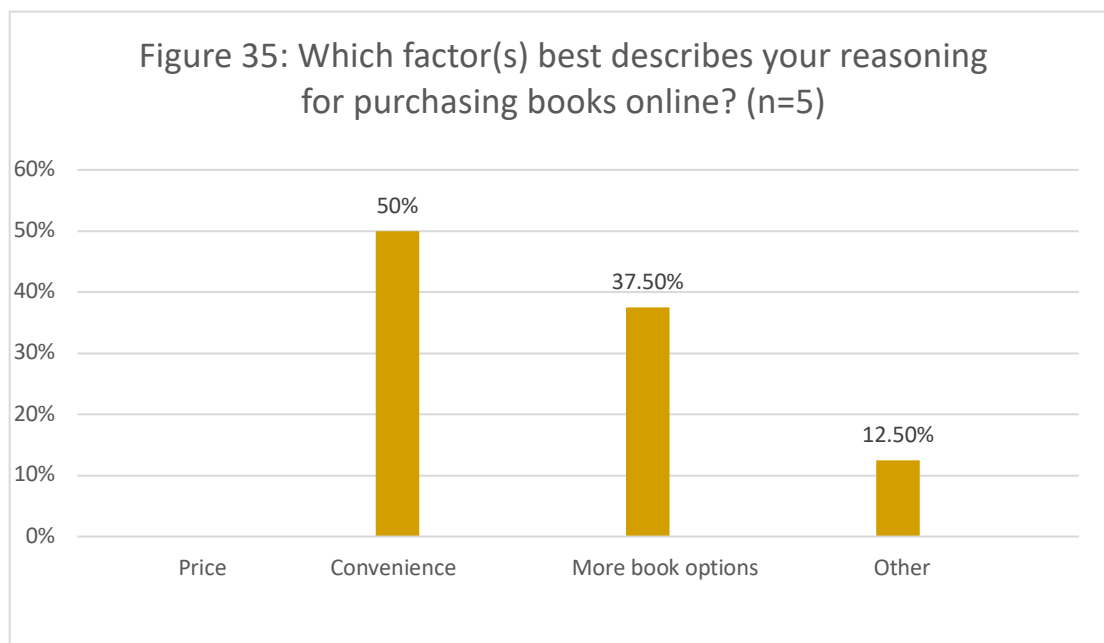
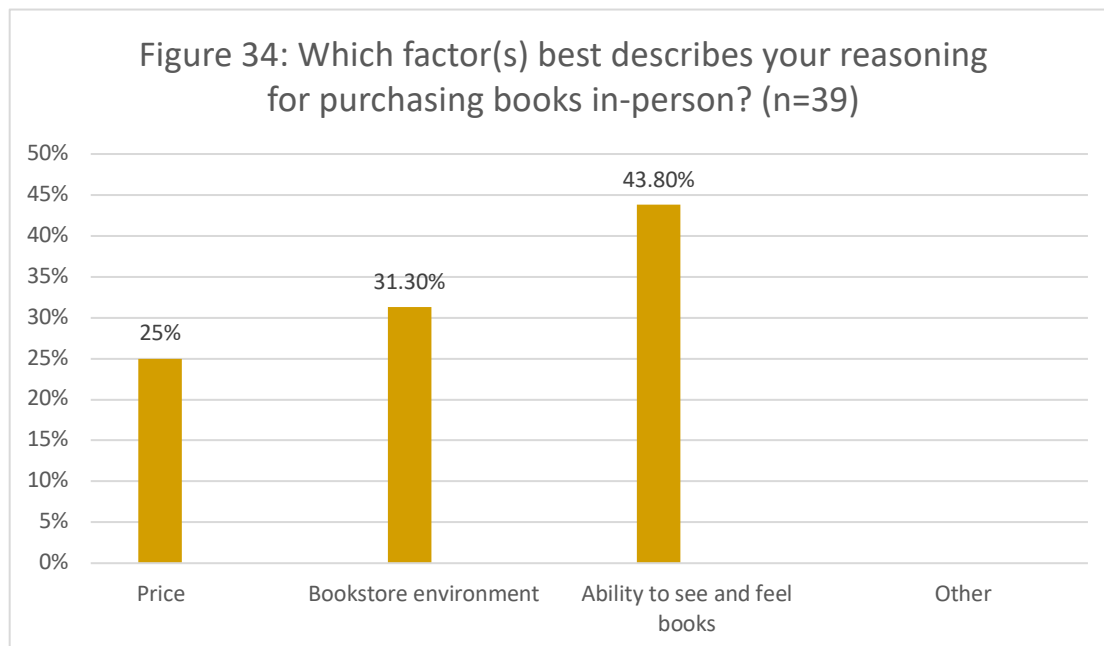
Of those who prefer to purchase books in-person, 43.8% stated that the ability to see and feel the books in a physical environment best describes their reasoning for in-person book buying. In Report 3, it was found that the interviewee prefers knowing the aesthetic of a book and having the ability to touch the pages and see the cover. This finding appears reflected in the survey as well as the ability to touch and view books in-person was the top reason for purchasing books at a physical store.

Respondents also enjoy the bookstore environment, as 31.3% picked this option as their reasoning for purchasing books in-person. The interviewee in Report 3 also mentioned that she enjoys the physical bookstore due to its familiarity and welcoming nature. Features such as the store café, familiar bookshelf layout, and non-book products contribute to the overall environment.

Not far behind, 25% of participants said price is a factor for purchasing books in-store. Occasionally, purchasing books in-person can result in sales or deals that would have otherwise been inaccessible to people purchasing the same books online. This could help explain why respondents chose price as one of their reasons for purchasing books in-store.

For the consumers who would rather purchase books online, 50% of participants reported convenience as the top reason, and 37.5% stated that purchasing books online allows for more book options. One respondent utilized the text box feature listed on the "Other" option and said, "I often order books off of Amazon because of fast shipping/Kindle options." Since only five people answered this question, it is worth mentioning that there may not be a sufficient amount of data to draw accurate conclusions about the main reasons why people prefer to purchase books online.

See Figures 34 and 35 for a complete list of respondents' reasoning for purchasing books either online or in-person.



Limitations

This report utilized non-probability, convenience sampling. Because of this, survey participants are unlikely to reflect all Barnes & Noble's consumers. This survey was administered through social media, meaning the survey questions centered around social media could have resulted in biased answers because participants may have been more likely to use social media than a person who did not initially view the survey on a social media platform. This survey intentionally studied the views and behaviors of Generation Z shoppers, yet other research should consider other age groups. Lastly, while the cross-tabulation graph provided important data, the relationship between the two survey questions is not casual.

Conclusion

After conducting this survey, the team revisited the initial research questions and concluded the following:

How strongly does Barnes & Noble leverage the success of #BookTok to obtain in-store exposure?

In summary, this survey provided key insights into how Barnes & Noble utilizes in-store #BookTok stands to influence consumer purchasing decisions and stay up to date on relevant and popular books. To leverage the success of #BookTok, Barnes & Noble generates content related to the community, as seen in Report 2, and advertises #BookTok trends at physical store locations, as demonstrated in this survey.

How does TikTok influence Generation Z purchasing decisions in the book retail industry?

TikTok is one of the strongest social media channels for influencing consumer book-buying habits due to its relevance and pertinence. More specifically, it was found in this survey that TikTok is a prominent outlet for promoting and advertising books due to the strength and popularity of the #BookTok community. This survey also illustrated that participants feel more influenced to buy a book if they see it advertised on social media. This can be done in many different ways, such as the

personable Barnes & Noble Instagram content mentioned in Report 3, or the various tactics utilized and described in the communications audit.

Which factors contribute to Generation Z purchasing a book either in-person or online?

When analyzing what motivates 18 - 24-year-old book-buyers to purchase books in-person as opposed to online, the most important factor was the ability to see and feel the books, which was also stated in the previously conducted interview. This survey also illustrated that purchasing books online may be more convenient than purchasing books in-person.

Overall, this report demonstrated the importance of promoting books on social media, leveraging the success of #BookTok and understanding which factors motivate consumers to purchase books either online or in-person. The research team's next steps are to compile findings from previous reports and propose suggestions to maximize engagement and improve communication efforts.

BARNES & NOBLE

Memo 5

To: James Daunt, CEO, Barnes & Noble

From: Elizabeth Schaible, Communication Specialist

CC: Nikki McClaran

Date: November 10, 2023

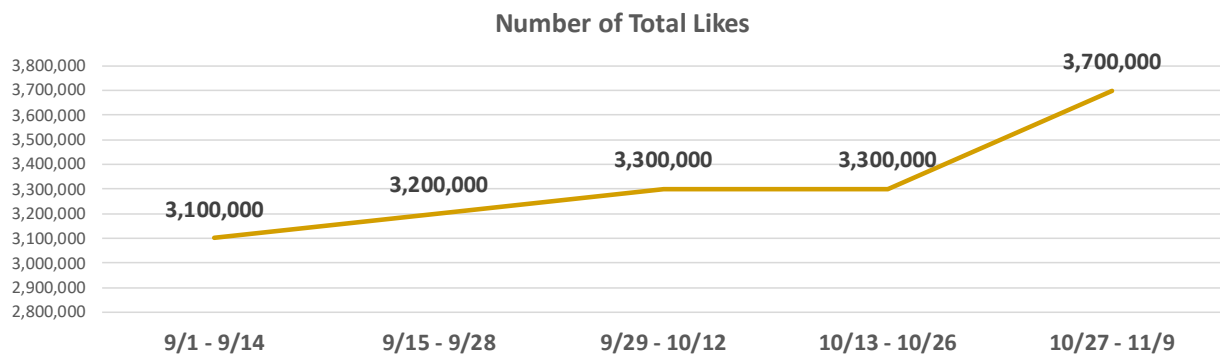
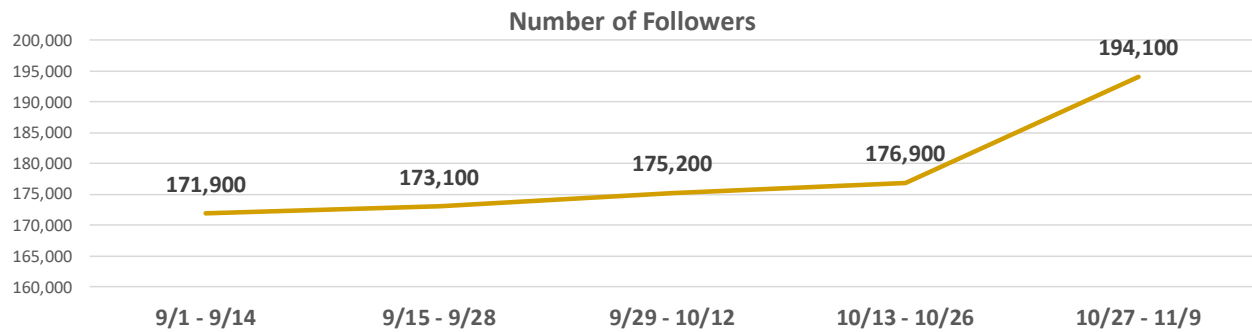
Re: Bi-weekly Research Report for October 27 - November 9, 2023

Overview

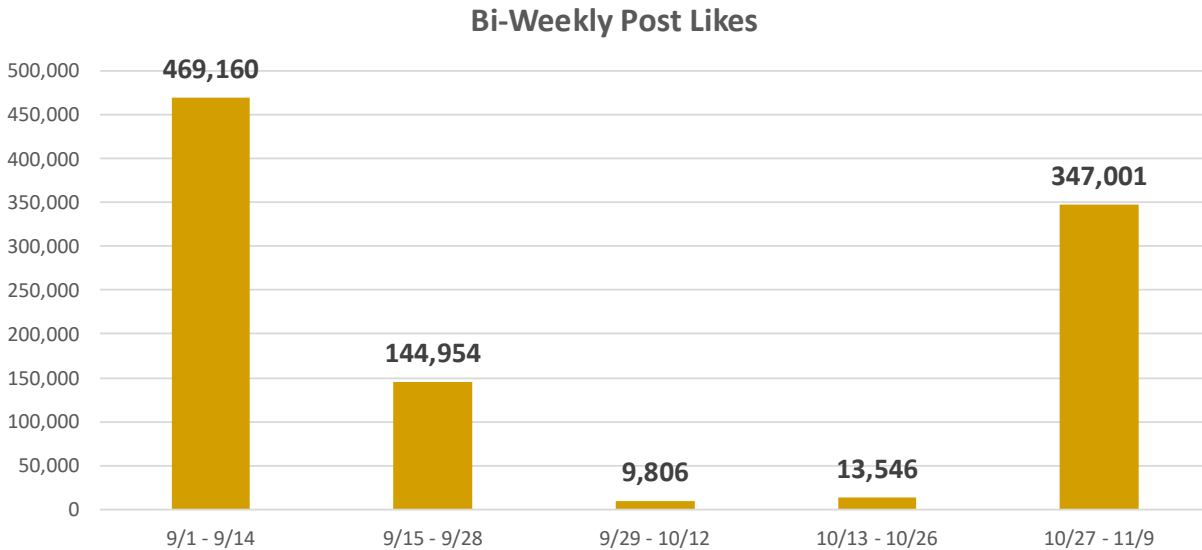
The Barnes & Noble TikTok account posted 26 times from Oct. 27 to Nov. 9, a 52.9% increase in post frequency compared to the 17 videos from Oct. 13 to Oct. 26. These posts were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively by the Barnes & Noble research team. Overall, the content posted in the last two weeks included many individual book spotlights as well as comedic meme templates to advertise in-store offerings. The TikTok that received the most views, likes, comments, and shares featured a Barnes & Noble barista explaining the perks of her job to the audience. Five of the 26 videos featured an author promoting her upcoming book, and the video with the second highest number of views and likes was included in this video series.

Barnes & Noble's TikTok Account (@bnbuzz)

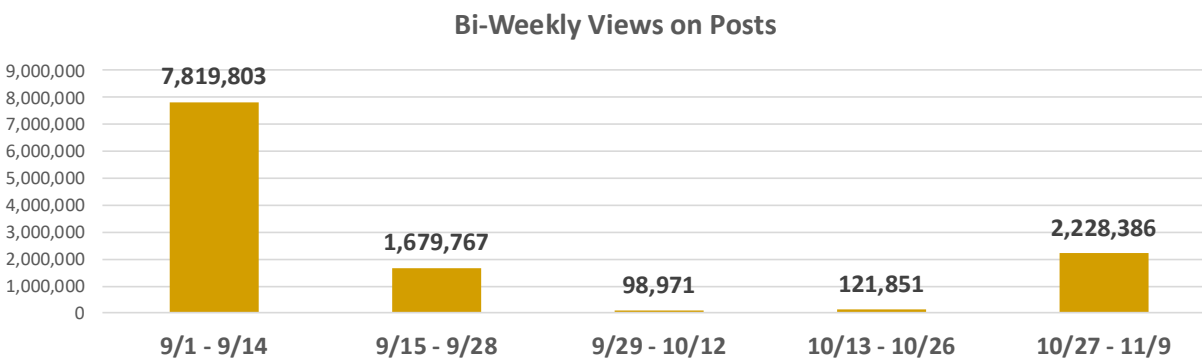
As of Nov. 10, Barnes & Noble has approximately 194,100 followers on TikTok, a 9.7% increase from the prior period. This is the highest number of followers the account has gained in two weeks since memo tracking began. Barnes & Noble is currently following 1,609 accounts. In total, Barnes & Noble has accumulated 3.7 million likes, a 12.1% increase from Oct. 13 to Oct. 26.



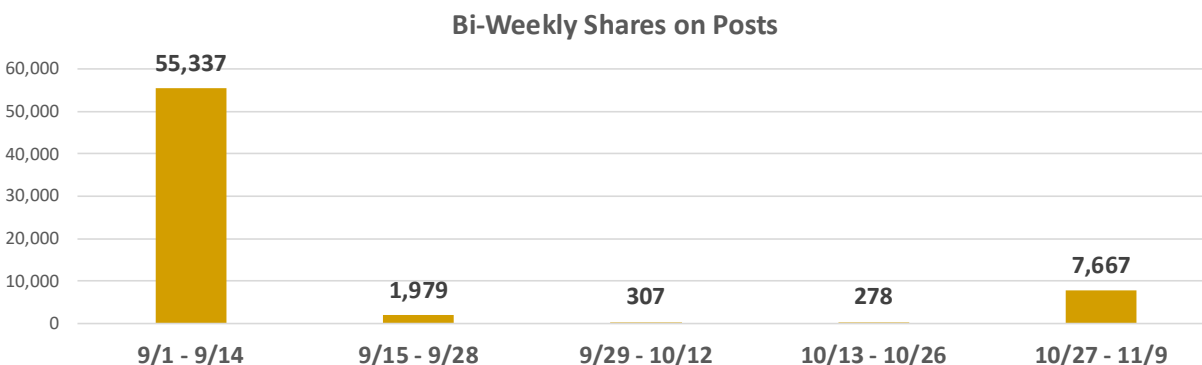
As mentioned in the introduction, the top-liked post in the last two weeks featured a barista explaining why she works at Barnes & Noble. The tone of this video is genuine and informative, illustrating the employee's personal beliefs and thoughts about working for Barnes & Noble. It received 156,000 likes, 193.5% more likes than the top-liked video of last period. This video reached viral status and is currently pinned by the account, allowing it to stay at the top of Barnes & Noble's post feed. The average number of likes for the TikToks posted in the last two weeks is approximately 13,346, which is a 1,574.5% increase compared to the average number from Oct. 13 to Oct. 26. In total, Barnes & Noble received 347,001 likes for its posts in the last two weeks.



The top-viewed video in the last two weeks garnered 889,900 views, 189.9% more views than the top-viewed post from Oct. 13 to Oct. 26. The video is the same as the top-liked post listed above. The Barnes & Noble TikTok account received a total of 2,228,386 views for the last two weeks, which is 2,106,535 more views than the prior period. The second top-liked and top-viewed post featured an author standing outside of a four-story Barnes & Noble and marveling at the fact that her launch party is inside. The caption stated "4 stories. Nightbane launch party inside! You can get the B&N Romance Edition now." This video was visually aesthetic and promoted both the author's book and the unique, exterior features of a specific Barnes & Noble location. This post accumulated 649,900 views and 127,100 likes, making it the most viewed and liked video of the author promotion campaign.

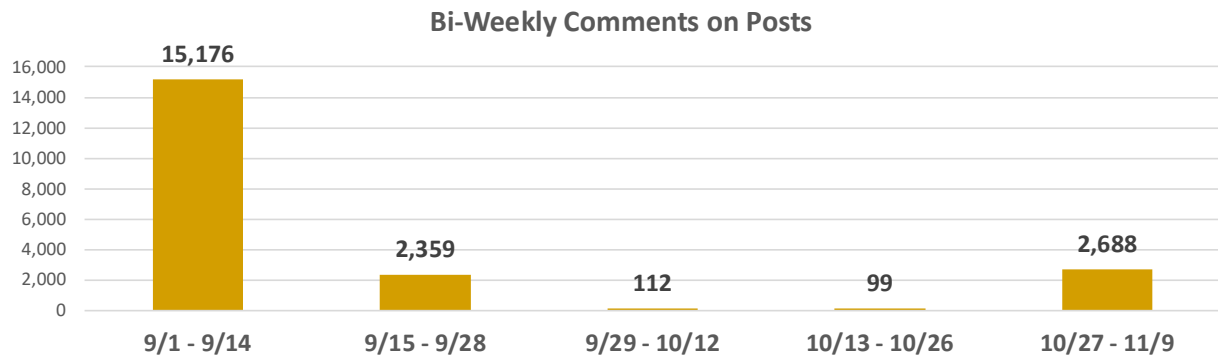



In total, the Barnes & Noble TikTok account received 7,667 shares for its posts in the last two weeks, which is a 2657.9% increase in shares from the prior period. The barista video that generated the most likes and views achieved the highest number of shares at 4,218. This is 192.6% more shares than the video with the most shares from Oct. 13 to Oct. 26. Advertising the extreme perks and benefits of working as a Barnes & Noble employee could generate conversation among the audience, which could explain why this video received the highest number of shares. This video also achieved the second-highest number of likes and views.




Barnes & Noble received 2,688 total comments for its 26 TikToks in the last two weeks, 2,588 more comments than the previous period. The account averaged 99.6 comments per video, and the video with the highest number of comments was the barista video that gathered the highest number of likes, comments, and views. Comments on this video were positive, expressing disbelief at the perks of working at Barnes & Noble and stating that working at Barnes & Noble would be a great experience.


Barnes & Noble liked and replied to comments on the barista video but did not keep this behavior consistent with the other videos posted during this time frame. Overall, the tone of the comments posted in last two weeks was lighthearted and full of excitement for upcoming books and offers.




 Violet
I'd waste my entire paycheck every week 😂
10-27 Reply 12.5K

 Barnes & Noble · Creator
We all do 😂
10-27 Reply 3219

— View 6 replies

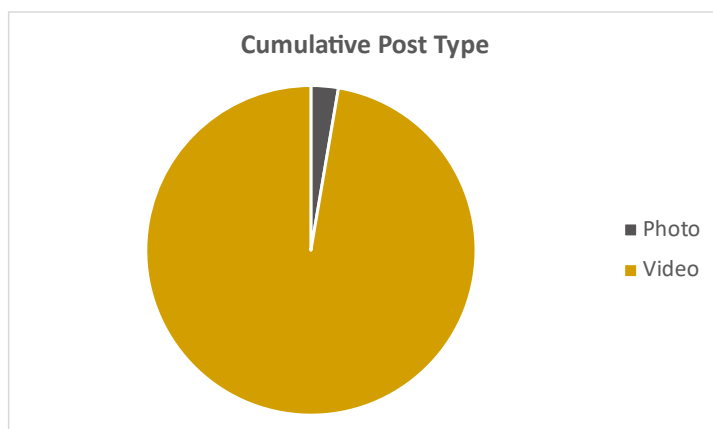
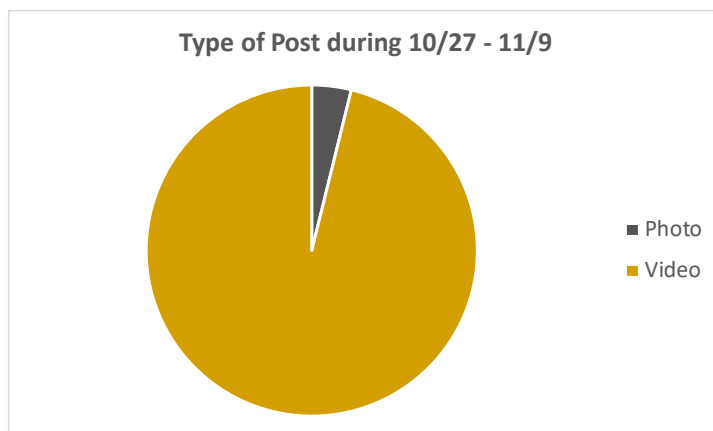
 karington95
half price books 😱 girl math would get me in so much trouble
10-27 Reply 9938

— View 14 replies

 taylir5
Did she say 50% off books?!?
10-28 Reply 1932

— View 6 replies

Barnes & Noble utilized the TikTok photo format once in the last two weeks, while the other 25 posts were videos. The TikTok posted in the photo format did not receive high engagement compared to other posts that were analyzed, which is not usually the case. Cumulatively, the account has posted 112 times since tracking began, with three posts being in the photo format.



Conclusion

In conclusion, the Barnes & Noble research team has analyzed a total of 112 posts in the past 10 weeks during memo tracking. After initial tracking began in memo 1, the account faced engagement percentage decreases and never achieved more likes, comments, views, or shares than the numbers listed in memo 1. However, the account's cumulative likes steadily increased, as well as the account's total number of followers. The posts from memo 3 had the least amount of engagement. The account

had little to no viral content in memos 2 through 4, and engagement percentage rates holistically increased again in memo 5.

During tracking, the team found themes that helped identify trends and patterns in the data. The first key finding shows that posts encouraging audience participation received high numbers of likes, views, shares, and comments. The video with the highest engagement during all of tracking was a part two video of the “If we say your name, your friend owes you a book” series. At the end of tracking, this video earned approximately 7.7 million views 479,100 likes. All other videos in this series consistently reached over 400,000 views. The videos in this series also featured employee involvement, which data shows is successful for the TikTok account. For example, the post with the most engagement in memo 5 included a video of an employee sharing her thoughts on working at Barnes & Noble.

It was also found that Barnes & Noble utilized the TikTok photo feature three times during tracking. These posts received relatively high engagement, averaging 21,691 views per video. Barnes & Noble used this type of template either for video trends or listing out specific book recommendations. The other 109 TikToks were posted in the traditional video format.

Overall, the account has a very amusing and upbeat tone. Barnes & Noble posts many meme videos using templates and takes advantage of popular TikTok trends and audios to advertise or recommend books. Employees are very involved in the TikToks, either making book-related jokes or giving opinions about their favorite reads.

Media Contact Suggestions

Throughout memo tracking, the research team compiled a list of influencers that Barnes & Noble could potentially partner with in hopes of increasing engagement and traction on TikTok. Barnes & Noble has not partnered with anyone in the past year, however, TikTok and Barnes & Noble launched a #BookTok campaign in the summer of 2022 which featured book influencers sharing their favorite summer books. Two of these influencers were Ayman Chaudhary (@aymanbooks) who has over 946,000 followers on TikTok, and Pauline (@thebooksiveloved) who has over 545,000 followers on TikTok. Both of these influencers are active members of the #BookTok community and share books and reading recommendations with their followers. Establishing another partnership with them could be advantageous for

Barnes & Noble, especially when advertising #BookTok offerings or new in-store features at Barnes & Noble locations.

Recommendations

Based on the tracked data and collected information, the research team recommends that Barnes & Noble post more TikTok content that directly involves audience members. After viewing the success of the “If we say your name, your friend owes you a book” series, the account could also create another series such as “What book you are based on your astrology sign” or “Which popular #BookTok book you are based on your name.” By making a personal connection to audience members, viewers could feel more inclined to engage and strengthen their connection to the account. This could also encourage more shares, which in turn generates more views and likes. Barnes & Noble’s TikTok account does not often feature author collaborations, as there was only two featured during memo tracking. However, the team recommends more frequently implementing these collaborations on TikTok, as these videos received high engagement. The second most-viewed post during tracking was a sentimental video with an author surprising guests at a Barnes & Noble store. This video was posted during her “takeover” of the account, and it reached 965,100 views. The third most-viewed post during tracking featured an author standing outside a four-story Barnes & Noble that hosted her book-launch party inside. This video received 889,900 views. This data could mean that viewers enjoy seeing personalized content from authors, and posting more of these collaborations could increase views and engagement.

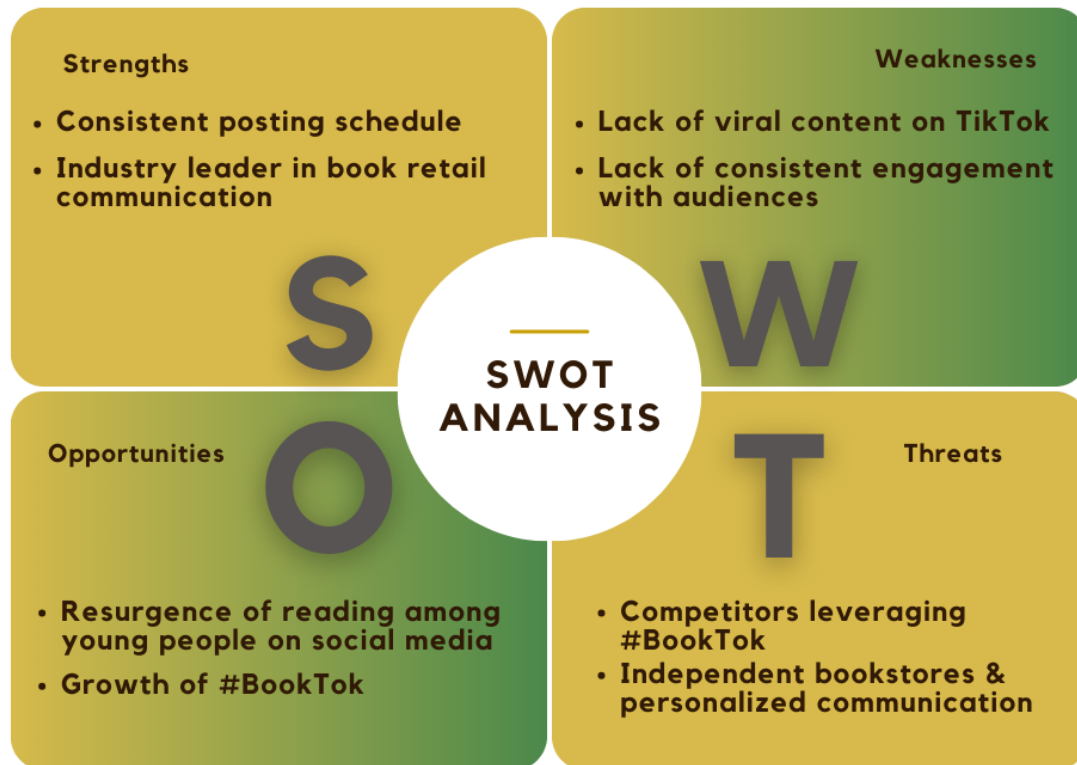
BARNES & NOBLE

Client Evaluation (Report 5)

Introduction

Serving as a cumulation of all the data collected by the research team over the past 10 weeks, this report analyzed Barnes & Noble's overall communication methods and potential audiences. At the end of the report, three strategic recommendations are provided that aim to enhance communication efforts and increase engagement. Various strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats are illustrated in the SWOT analysis, informed primarily by details from the memos, client backgrounder and communications audit. The survey research report gave insights into the importance of leveraging the success and popularity of #BookTok, so certain influencers who have partnered or interacted with Barnes & Noble on TikTok are also listed. After analyzing the quantitative and qualitative research from all four previous reports, most notably the survey and interview, two audience personas were created to reflect Barnes & Noble's target audiences. Finally, three recommendations are provided that are specific to findings from the research conducted in the last three months. Holistically, this research aimed to identify which Barnes & Noble social media channel garners the most engagement and interaction, what motivates Generation Z to purchase book in-person, and how the implementation of in-store #BookTok stands influence consumer purchasing decisions.

SWOT Analysis



Strengths

Consistent posts on social media

As seen in the memo tracking conducted by the research team for the last 10 weeks, Barnes & Noble posts consistently on TikTok, averaging 11.2 videos per week. Cumulatively, Barnes & Noble's TikTok account posted 112 TikToks during the tracking. In the communications audit, Barnes & Noble's Instagram account averaged 2.3 posts per day during the month that was tracked. The audit also noted Barnes & Noble's overall strong Instagram and TikTok presence, which Barnes & Noble uses to post creative content with a humorous, yet informative, tone. According to Adobe, social media algorithms favor accounts that post consistently, making this an effective way to increase followers and engagement ("The Importance of Consistent Posting", 2023). As seen in the memos, over the last 10 weeks, Barnes & Noble gained approximately 22,200 followers as a result of its posts.

Industry leader in book retail communication

The competitor analysis chart in the communications audit demonstrates that Barnes & Noble has a stronger all-around social media presence than Amazon Books, Barnes & Noble's largest competitor. According to Rival IQ, Barnes & Noble ranks No. 1 on TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube for social media presence in the book retail industry. Amazon Books does not have an active TikTok account, allowing Barnes & Noble to successfully target and reach #BookTok audiences with minimal interference.

Weaknesses

Lack of viral content on TikTok

Barnes & Noble's TikTok account had no viral content in memos 3 and 4 and had minimal viral content during memo 2 tracking. When the account posted videos that included certain TikTok trends or popular audio tracks, some of them achieved viral status, including the "If we say your name, your friend owes you a book" series. After initial tracking began, the account faced steady engagement decreases for weeks until memo 4 was created, where the account still had percentage decreases in total shares and comments.

Lack of consistent communication to audience

Barnes & Noble does not consistently interact with and reply to users on its social media accounts. Initially, as seen in memo 1, the account did not engage with TikTok users at all. While it is shown in the rest of the memos that Barnes & Noble occasionally likes and replies to comments, the audit demonstrates that Barnes & Noble rarely replies to users on Instagram. Barnes & Noble's TikTok account tends to like more comments than it replies to, however, replying to many comments could be an effective way to further increase responses and engagement.

Opportunities

Resurgence of reading among young people on social media

Reading has become a popular activity among younger people, largely inspired by social media and the rise of book influencers, as mentioned in Report 1. Platforms

such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok have established communities for book lovers, #BookTok most notably impacting Generation Z (Howarth, 2023). However, BookTube and Bookstagram have also positively contributed to this phenomenon, encouraging readership, community building, book discovery, and literacy promotion (Gautam, 2023). Barnes & Noble's successful, active social media accounts can further contribute to this resurgence by targeting younger audiences who are active in these communities.

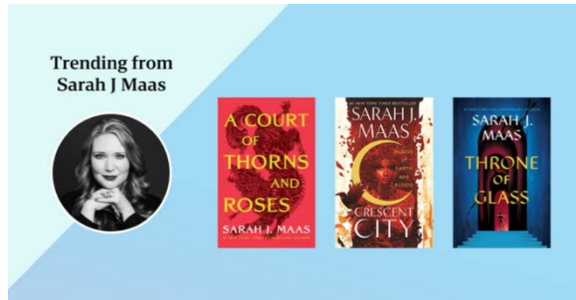
Growth of #BookTok

The #BookTok community on TikTok has skyrocketed in the past couple of years, building a community for readers to discover new books and participate in reading-related conversations. In the survey conducted by the research team, 92.6% of respondents have heard of the #BookTok community. According to the Publisher's Association poll mentioned in Report 1, 49% of surveyed 16 - 25-year-olds reported that they have gone to a physical bookstore to buy a book because of the impact of #BookTok (Brown, 2022). As seen in the audit, Barnes & Noble's TikTok account heavily incorporates #BookTok into its posts in hopes of staying engaged and relevant within the community. By continuing this involvement, Barnes & Noble could potentially establish a new partnership with the platform or gain new followers due to the platform's popularity.

Threats

Competitors leveraging #BookTok

Amazon Books has multiple website pages designated specifically for #BookTok books. By separating these #BookTok books into categories, consumers may find that it is easier and more convenient to purchase popular TikTok books through Amazon as opposed to Barnes & Noble. Amazon Books also has graphics on its site that features trending, popular books from various authors. While Barnes & Noble has one page on its website for #BookTok books, Amazon's structured and organized online marketing approach could gain more audience traction than Barnes & Noble's site.



Amazon.com
https://www.amazon.com › booktok-books › k=booktok... ⋮

Booktok Books

Malibu Rising: A Novel · Malibu Rising: A Novel · Icebreaker: A Novel (The Maple Hills Series) · Icebreaker: A Novel (The Maple Hills Series) · Archer's Voice.
4.5 ★ seller rating (2.5K) · 30-day returns

Amazon.com
https://www.amazon.com › ... ⋮

Best of #BookTok

BookToks' Literary Sensations · Mystery, Thriller & Suspense · Romance · Literature and Fiction · Science Fiction and Fantasy.
30-day returns

Amazon.com
https://www.amazon.com › booktok-books-spicy › k=... ⋮

Booktok Books Spicy

Haunting Adeline (Cat and Mouse Duet) · Haunting Adeline (Cat and Mouse Duet) · Icebreaker: A Novel (The Maple Hills Series Book 1) · Icebreaker: A...
30-day returns



Independent bookstores and personalized communication

Although Barnes & Noble has made great efforts to localize their stores and focus on community, local bookstores with a smaller following naturally have an easier time forming connections and relationships with consumers due to their uniqueness and personality (Arnold, 2019). This can also be reflected through social media, where local authors and events can be easily promoted and targeted to specific audiences. Because of this, Barnes & Noble needs to understand the importance of engaging with audiences on social media while personalizing and localizing social channels like the company is doing with each brick-and-mortar store.

Influencers

As seen in the communications audit, Barnes & Noble understands the relevance of #BookTok and posts content related to the platform. In summer 2022, Barnes & Noble partnered with #BookTok and established a summer reading campaign. As mentioned in Report 1, the goal of the campaign was to encourage members of the #BookTok community to find new reads and inspire others to do the same. According to Publisher's Weekly, a few prominent book influencers were chosen to partner with TikTok and Barnes & Noble to launch this campaign ("TikTok, B&N Launch #BookTokChallenge," 2022). Influencers who participated include:

- [@aymansbooks](#)
- [@bookpapi](#)
- [@kendrareads](#)
- [@kevintnorman](#)
- [@maistorybook](#)
- [@thebooksiloved](#)

Influencers shared what they would be reading over the summer and included #BookTokChallenge in their captions.

Other popular influencers on #BookTok have posted videos related to Barnes & Noble. Although Barnes & Noble has not directly partnered with them, the company may consider partnering with these influencers in the future to reach new audiences and increase engagement on TikTok. These influencers include:

- [@themarysarge](#) - Mary is a book influencer on TikTok with approximately 150,000 followers who posts book recommendations and reviews. She attended a book influencer panel at her local Barnes & Noble to promote *Iron Flame* by Rebecca Yarros.
- [@kreads_books](#) - Kendra has 2,260 followers and uses TikTok to promote her favorite books. A lot of her videos are made in-store at Barnes & Noble, and one video specifically advertised a Barnes & Noble exclusive of *The Inheritance Games* by Jennifer Lynn Barnes.
- [@brandis_book_bureau](#) - Brandi has 1,832 followers and posts book reviews on TikTok. She is already followed by Barnes & Noble.

Audience Analysis

Based on the secondary research conducted in Report 1, Barnes & Noble's target audience is a Generation Z female who enjoys reading (Barnett, 2023). Although First Research states that the target consumer for the book retail industry is an educated, wealthy, and married woman, the growth of social media, particularly TikTok, has encouraged a resurgence of reading among young people. In a poll conducted by the Publishers Association, 68% of surveyed 16-25-year-olds said that #BookTok has inspired them to pick up a book and read (Brown, 2022).

According to the data found from Report 4, 60% of surveyed 18-24-year-olds said that they are likely to purchase a book they have seen promoted on social media. Respondents specifically noted that they've found #BookTok to be a good way to find new books to read, with 37.5% choosing to agree and 37.5% choosing to

strongly agree. In regard to Barnes & Noble, 92.3% of 18-24-year-olds who have purchased a book from a #BookTok stand at Barnes & Noble believe the stands add relevance. While the research team cannot establish causation with this cross-tabulation, it is believed that people on #BookTok want to see promoted content in-stores. Barnes & Noble's awareness of the success and popularity of #BookTok has allowed this audience segment to be successfully targeted and reached.

The survey results show that the majority of participants prefer to purchase books in-person rather than online. The ability to see and feel the books was the top reason for this, and qualitative research gathered from Report 3 reflects this reasoning. The interviewee also stated that the non-book products, familiar store layout, and café contribute to the in-person experience.

Audience Personas

Based on the audience analysis, two personas were created to personify Barnes & Noble's target audience.



Cordelia is a 22-year-old female college student majoring in English Literature at Arizona State University. She lives in an off-campus apartment in downtown Phoenix, Arizona and makes under \$15,000 a year with her two student jobs. Her parents help pay for her rent and tuition. She doesn't have a lot of spending money, but she loves to buy books! She has been a booklover since she was a child and grew up going to Barnes & Noble with her parents.

Since she lives in the middle of metropolitan area, Cordelia does not have a car. Because of this, she tends to conveniently order books online, even though she usually prefers to purchase them in-person. Cordelia has public transportation accessible to her.

In her free time, Cordelia spends her time browsing TikTok and is an active member of the #BookTok community. She follows Barnes & Noble on TikTok and enjoys seeing content related to #BookTok. She is consistently finding new books to read and loves the #BookTok stands displayed at Barnes & Noble.



Jenny is a female 18-year-old high school senior who lives in Cedar Falls, Iowa. She is a full-time student who works at her local Subway on the weekends. Her favorite subject in school is English, and she only recently began to enjoy reading due to influencers on Instagram and TikTok. She's beginning to see a lot of book-related videos pop up on her TikTok feed. She loves social media and wants to start posting review or recommendation videos on the books that she has read.

Jenny doesn't have a strong preference for purchasing books online or in-person, but she enjoys the physical bookstore environment and loves buying coffee at the Barnes & Noble café. She hasn't been to a lot of Barnes & Noble stores, but she wants to ask for gift cards for Christmas and post a "book haul" video on TikTok for the New Year.

BARNES & NOBLE

Recommendations

In response to the collected data, the research team has developed three strategic communications recommendations for Barnes & Noble to implement:

Barnes & Noble should post more TikTok content that promotes in-store #BookTok offerings.

It was found in the research survey that TikTok has influenced 76% of participants to purchase a book. It was also noted that 72.2% of respondents prefer to purchase books in-person. Barnes & Noble already capitalizes on the success and popularity of TikTok as demonstrated in the company's memo tracking communications audit. However, Barnes & Noble can post more TikTok content involving in-store book offerings related to #BookTok, such as specific stands or book promotions. This could help capture the attention of their TikTok audience and specifically target Generation Z to increase consumer turnout in-stores.

Barnes & Noble should utilize social media to advertise the benefits of buying books in-person.

Barnes & Noble already has a wide array of successful social media content. The communications audit illustrated that lighthearted, comedic meme content drives engagement on Instagram, while personalized #BookTok videos are popular on TikTok. In memo 2 and memo 4, Barnes & Noble used the photo feature on TikTok to promote certain books. Both posts were successful and garnered above the average number of likes for their respective periods. Since these tactics are already successful, it could be beneficial to utilize TikTok and Instagram to highlight the unique, in-store features available at Barnes & Noble locations. In the interview conducted by the team, it was found that the respondent enjoys attributes such as the café, non-book products, specialized book stands, in-store deals, and specialized store layouts. She believes that they add to the holistic book-buying experience and environment. In the survey, the majority of participants said that the ability to see and

feel books is the top reason for purchasing books in-person. Creating social media posts that highlight these unique experiences could help combat the fact that people purchase books online largely for the convenience, as noted in the survey. By advertising that a personalized experience can outweigh convenience, younger audiences could be driven to shop in-person at their local Barnes & Noble.

Barnes & Noble should create more #BookTok content that features employee recommendations.

As demonstrated in the memos, the TikTok content that consistently received high engagement included personalized content or recommendations from Barnes & Noble employees. The interviewee from Report 3 explained a potential reason for this, summarizing that personal recommendations added expertise and a sense of intimacy to Barnes & Noble's social media accounts. #BookTok has positively impacted consumer purchases, as seen in Report 4, so utilizing #BookTok as a catalyst for more personalized, employee content could help achieve higher engagement and audience interaction. It could also increase awareness about specific #BookTok products, which in turn could drive sales or create conversations about the spotlighted books.

Conclusion

To summarize, the research team has compiled data over the last 10 weeks to relay background information about Barnes & Noble, create an audit that demonstrates strengths and weaknesses of Barnes & Noble's social media channels, and conduct both an interview and survey to gather qualitative and quantitative data that will support the team's research objectives.

It was found in the backgrounder that there has been a resurgence of reading among Generation Z, largely motivated by the growth of social media, particularly TikTok. The audit found that Barnes & Noble's strongest social media platforms are Instagram and TikTok, with TikTok accumulating the most engagement. In the interview, the team explored reasons why a younger audience would want to purchase books in-store and further examined the effects of #BookTok on Barnes & Noble consumer purchasing habits. The survey attempted to generalize these findings and provided more data concerning in-store #BookTok stands, the effects of social media on book-buying habits, and the motivations behind purchasing books online and in-person.

In response to the team's initial research objectives, it was found that in-store features, such as non-book products or familiar store layouts, motivate Generation Z to purchase books in retail stores. The ability to see and feel books combined with an aesthetic bookstore environment contributes to the willingness to buy books in-person as opposed to online. As mentioned above, the audit proved that Barnes & Noble's TikTok account accumulates the most interaction and engagement. Finally, it was determined in the survey that the implementation of in-store #BookTok stands allows Barnes & Noble to add relevancy to its stores and leverage the success of a community that encourages book purchases and book-buying habits.

Works Cited

- About B&N.* (2023). Retrieved from Barnes & Noble: <https://www.barnesandnobleinc.com/about-bn/>
- About BN.com.* (2023). Retrieved from Barnes & Noble: <https://help.barnesandnoble.com/hc/en-us/articles/5336639763483-About-BN-com-and-Retail-Store-Price-Differences>
- Aratani, L. (2023, April 15). *'Amazon doesn't care about books': how Barnes & Noble bounced back.* Retrieved from The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/apr/15/barnes-and-noble-bookstores-james-daunt>
- Arnold, A. (2019, July 23). *The Importance of Independent Bookstores.* Retrieved from Swenson Book Development: <https://www.swensonbookdevelopment.com/blog/2019/the-importance-of-independent-bookstores/>.
- Barnes & Noble.* (2023). Retrieved from Barnes & Noble, Inc. : <https://www.barnesandnobleinc.com/>
- Barnes & Noble Company Profile.* (2019). Retrieved from IBISWorld: <https://www.ibisworld.com/us/company/barnes-noble-inc/8661/#:~:text=Description,26.6%25%20of%20total%20industry%20revenue.>
- Barnes & Noble Education.* (2023). Retrieved from Barnes & Noble Education: <https://www.bned.com/>
- Barnes & Noble Education Reports Third Quarter Fiscal Year 2023 Financial Results.* (2023, March 9). Retrieved from Business Wire: <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20230309005178/en/Barnes-Noble-Education-Reports-Third-Quarter-Fiscal-Year-2023-Financial-Results#:~:text=Consolidated%20third%20quarter%20GAAP%20gross,to%20the%20prior%20year%20period.>
- Barnes & Noble History.* (2023). Retrieved from Barnes & Noble: <https://www.barnesandnobleinc.com/about-bn/history/>
- Barnes & Noble Reports Fiscal 2019 Year-End Financial Results.* (2019, June 19). Retrieved from Business Wire: <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20190619005407/en/Barnes-Noble-Reports-Fiscal-2019-Year-End-Financial-Results>
- Barnett, D. (2023, August 6). *'I can't stress how much BookTok sells': teen literary influencers swaying publishers.* Retrieved from The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/aug/06/i-cant-stress-how-much-booktok-sells-teen-literary-influencers-swaying-publishers>
- BN.com Pricing.* (2023). Retrieved from Barnes & Noble: <https://help.barnesandnoble.com/hc/en-us/articles/5353473886747-BN-com-Pricing>
- BNED Stock.* (2023). Retrieved from Fintel: <https://fintel.io/so/us/bned#:~:text=Largest%20shareholders%20include%20Greenhaven%20Road,Gsa%20Capital%20Partners%20LLp%2C%20and>
- Bookstores Industry Profile.* (2023). Retrieved from First Research.

- Brown, L. (2022, November 23). *More than half of young readers credit BookTok with sparking passion for reading, PA finds*. Retrieved from The Bookseller: <https://www.thebookseller.com/news/more-than-half-of-young-readers-credit-booktok-with-sparking-passion-for-reading-pa-finds>
- Curcic, D. (2023, January 12). *Amazon Publishing Statistics*. Retrieved from WordsRated: <https://wordsrated.com/amazon-publishing-statistics/#:~:text=Amazon%20book%20sales&text=Amazon%20generates%20around%20%2428%20billion,million%20print%20books%20every%20year>.
- Elizabeth, T. (2022, June 18). *TikTok and Barnes & Noble Join Forces to Promote Summer Reading*. Retrieved from B&N Reads: <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/blog/tiktok-and-barnes-and-noble-join-forces/#:~:text=Tracy%20Elizabeth%20is%20TikTok's%20Bay,Risk%20%26%20Prevention%20from%20Harvard%20University>.
- Gautam, A. (2023, September 25). *Bookstagram and BookTube: The Influence of Book Influencers*. Retrieved from Medium: <https://medium.com/@arp3348/bookstagram-and-booktube-the-influence-of-book-influencers-b78498488c65>.
- Havens-Bowen, A. (2023, August 6). *Why You Often See Starbucks Inside Barnes & Noble Locations*. Retrieved from Tasting Table: <https://www.tastingtable.com/1357946/reason-starbucks-inside-barnes-noble/>
- Hiltzik, M. (2023, February 1). *Column: Barnes & Noble saved itself by putting books first. Imagine that*. Retrieved from Los Angeles Times: <https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2023-02-01/barnes-noble-survived-a-near-death-experience-and-its-now-growing-again>
- Howarth, N. (2023, March 28). *The Resurgence of Leisure Reading*. Retrieved from Impact: <https://impactnottingham.com/2023/03/the-resurgence-of-leisure-reading/>
- The importance of consistent posting for social media creators*. Retrieved from Adobe Express: <https://www.adobe.com/express/learn/blog/consistent-posting-creators#:~:text=Social%20media%20algorithms%20favor%20those%20who%20post%20consistently&text=As%20a%20result%2C%20content%20that,a%20social%20media%20snowball%20effect>.
- McMillen, J. (2023, January 22). *Can BookTok Save Bookstores? Read Between The Lines*. Retrieved from Forbes: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jennmcmillen/2023/01/22/can-booktok-save-bookstores-read-between-the-lines/?sh=3d36862c37b1>
- Mergent Intellect*. (2023, March). Retrieved from Mergent Intellect: <https://www-mergentintellect-com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/index.php/search/companyDetails/186716668>
- Mergent Online*. (2019). Retrieved from Mergent Online: <https://www-mergentonline-com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/documents.php?compnumber=78060>
- NOOK Tablets & eReaders*. (2023). Retrieved from Barnes & Noble: https://www.barnesandnoble.com/b/nook-devices/_/N-8ri

Selyukh, A. (2023, March 7). *How Barnes & Noble turned a page, expanding for the first time in years*. Retrieved from NPR: <https://www.npr.org/2023/03/07/1161295820/how-barnes-noble-turned-a-page-expanding-for-the-first-time-in-years#:~:text=Barnes%20%26%20Noble%20sales%20have%20been,decades%20now%2C%22%20Oshe%20says.>

TikTok, B&N Launch #BookTokChallenge. Retrieved from Publisher's Weekly: <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/newsbrief/index.html?record=3821>.

Wolfe, E. (2022, October 11). *The narrative of BookTok*. Retrieved from The Michigan Daily: <https://www.michigandaily.com/statement/the-narrative-of-booktok/#:~:text=BookTok%20has%20a%20primarily%20female,and%20the%20authors%20they%20promote.>

Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Take me through your process of buying a book.
 - a. Do you prefer to purchase books online or in-person?
2. How often do you shop at Barnes & Noble?
3. Do you have a Barnes & Noble location preference?
 - a. What features stand out at this location?
4. Are you on #BookTok?
 - a. How does the #BookTok community on TikTok influence you to purchase books?
5. What is one book that #BookTok has influenced you to purchase?
6. Which stands or sections do you tend to gravitate toward in Barnes & Noble?
 - a. How do the #BookTok stands in Barnes & Noble stores influence you to purchase books?
7. How do you think Barnes & Noble separates itself from other bookstores?
 - a. Do you think that the offered products that are not books contribute to your willingness to go in-person to purchase a book?
8. How does the café area contribute to your in-person experience?
9. Are you following any of Barnes & Noble's social media platforms? If so, which ones?
 - a. What social media platform do you think is most successful for Barnes & Noble?
10. How do you think #BookTok contributes to the success of the Barnes and Noble TikTok?
11. What type of Barnes & Noble Instagram content do you think is most engaging?
12. What type of Barnes & Noble TikTok content do you think is most engaging?

Appendix B: Interview Transcript

Barnes & Noble conducted an interview to determine a select participant's opinions regarding the in-store features at Barnes & Noble locations, Barnes & Noble's social media presence, and the impact of #BookTok on Barnes & Noble stores.

This interview occurred on October 10, 2023, at 12:00 P.M. MST.

The transcript of this interview is listed below.

Interviewer: Hello, my name is Elizabeth Schaible. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study about Barnes & Noble. I'd like to ask you a few questions on your views of Barnes & Noble, both in terms of your personal thoughts and how you think others view Barnes & Noble. There are no right or wrong answers. We're just as interested in your positive comments as your negative ones. The intent is just to understand how you honestly feel. This study is for class purposes only and has not been funded by any organization. Let me assure you that no personal identifying information, such as your name, will be used in the final report. I would like to record this interview both with handwritten notes and with an audio recording. Are you comfortable with this?

Interviewee: Yes, I am.

Interviewer: Let's begin. Take me through your process of buying a book.

Interviewee: Okay, so normally, I know what book I want to buy before I go in. I already have a list of books that I've been wanting to read for a while or have just recently seen. But when I walk in, I usually try to find, you know, at least one of those off my list, but I usually also end up picking one that I wasn't really anticipating seeing, because they usually have displays out that are related to books that I'm interested in. So, I usually pick up probably two to three books every trip that I take. And I don't always do a lot of reading into certain plot elements. Sometimes I see a cover that looks interesting, and then I'll read the back. I'll see if it's something that I'm interested in. But I usually just go off stuff that I like, or stuff that's related to the things that I like. And then I'll check out and read the books.

Interviewer: Do you prefer to purchase books online or in-person?

Interviewee: I prefer to purchase books in-person. I really enjoy the aesthetic of how a book looks. I like knowing how big it's going to be or what the cover and the pages feel like, so I would prefer buying in-person, but I have bought a pretty good number of books online as well.

Interviewer: How often do you shop at Barnes & Noble?

Interviewee: I would say I probably end up at a Barnes & Noble once a week on average, sometimes more. I don't always end up buying whenever I go in, but I do end up there often. I would say maybe once or twice a week.

Interviewer: Do you have a Barnes & Noble location preference?

Interviewee: I do. My favorite Barnes & Noble is the Barnes & Noble on Val Vista Drive in the Dana Park Complex. It's the one that I went to when I was growing up in my house, so it's the one that I refer to the most.

Interviewer: What features stand out at this location?

Interviewee: I really enjoy the format of that Barnes & Noble. It just is familiar to me. They have the shelves and the genres in places that just make sense to me. But I would say the familiarity of it is what gets me the most. I know that other Barnes & Nobles have, you know, two stories, which is interesting, and they have a lot of merchandise rather than just books which I know is appealing.

Interviewer: Are you on #BookTok?

Interviewee: I am, yes.

Interviewer: How does the #BookTok community on TikTok influence you to purchase books?

Interviewee: The #BookTok community definitely opens up my horizons in terms of genres, or even just more books in the genres that I really like. I would say I am influenced the most by the TikToks that say, "if you like this book, then you might like this book" and then it shows a different book that's either in a different genre or in the same genre. I just learn more about what kinds of books are out there and what stories people enjoy. I tend to gravitate towards those.

Interviewer: What is one book that #BookTok has influenced you to purchase?

Interviewee: I would say there are a few, but the one that I see most often is probably the book *Fourth Wing*. I see that one very often, so I purchased it soon after I saw a couple of TikToks, and I have continued to see a lot of TikToks about it.

Interviewer: You had mentioned that you see display stands at Barnes & Noble featuring books you like. Which stands or sections do you tend to gravitate toward in Barnes & Noble?

Interviewee: I tend to gravitate toward the tables that have the covers face up, and you know, you can see all kinds of different covers or different authors, and then you pick them up and feel them and they tend to be related in genre. So, if I see a fantasy table, then I'll tend to walk over that way, and then I can look at all the covers and see which ones I like.

Interviewer: How do the #BookTok stands in Barnes & Noble stores influence you to purchase books?

Interviewee: If I see a book on a #BookTok stand that I have also seen on TikTok, I am more influenced to buy it. And if I see a book on the stand that I haven't already seen on TikTok, I guess that just kind of tells me that people in my area are reading that book and people that shop in the Barnes & Noble I shop in like that book. So, I think it's just kind of like the crowd dynamic of knowing that other people like it, so I would also like to read it and hopefully like it.

Interviewer: How do you think Barnes & Noble separates itself from other bookstores?

Interviewee: When you walk into Barnes & Noble, obviously the main attraction is the books. But you tend to see lots of other things that are book-related, like sticky notes, pens, annotation stuff, journals, and tote bags. Stuff that, you know, readers would like. But you also tend to see stuff like Legos and toys, lots of things that I feel like a variety of people would really enjoy. There are action figures, maybe for older fans, or puzzles. They just have an appealing layout and display that is easy for people to gravitate toward, so I think that's how they set themselves apart in terms of what they sell at their stores.

Interviewer: Do you think that the offered products that are not books contribute to your willingness to go in-person to purchase a book?

Interviewee: Yes, I think so, for sure. There's a lot of stuff there that I find myself really liking. I found a planner there my freshman year of college that I've used every single year since then. I've gone to multiple different Barnes & Noble stores trying to find stuff like it. It contributes to me going in-person, there's just a lot there to see.

Interviewer: How does the cafe area contribute to your in-person experience?

Interviewee: The café areas are super nice. I think that having an area where you can get a sweet tea or a sweet drink or just something to enjoy while you read a book is super pleasant to so many people. It can cause you to maybe stay in the store a little bit longer or cause you to browse a little bit more than you thought you would. That's happened to me before, at least. I've gone there, looked at a book, put it back, gotten a coffee, and then just kind of sat there for a while. But then I thought about the book a little bit more, and how nice it would be to have a book while I'm drinking. It definitely adds a layer of coziness to the whole experience, I think.

Interviewer: Are you following any of the Barnes & Noble social media platforms? If so, which ones?

Interviewee: Yes, I follow the TikTok and Instagram.

Interviewer: What social media platform do you think is the most successful for Barnes & Noble?

Interviewee: I think that nowadays, the TikTok account for Barnes & Noble would be the most successful. I also think Instagram is solid because it's just been around a lot longer and has maybe an older, stronger following. But with TikTok, they're able to kind of branch out in terms of what they post to get more engagement or attention. I think it has definitely expanded their horizons in terms of marketing.

Interviewer: How do you think #BookTok contributes to the success of the Barnes & Noble TikTok?

Interviewee: I think that there's a lot of trends that were created at first by people who were on #BookTok. Trends like the "if you like this, then maybe you'd like this" kind of stuff. I think it started with #BookTok, and then it kind of gave the Barnes & Noble TikTok a platform to try those things. And then they were able to get

engagement because those trends are popular on #BookTok, and they were able to integrate those trends into their content.

Interviewer: What type of Barnes & Noble Instagram content do you think is most engaging?

Interviewee: The Instagram content I think is most engaging is when they have employees that work at a Barnes & Noble, specifically ones that are kind of around my age, and they'll highlight those members and what kind of books they like. Sometimes they'll have them show, you know, the area of the store that they're in and they'll talk about the book and why they liked it or why they connected to it. And I think it just kind of adds a lot of intimacy. You get to know the people that work there, and you get to know the books that they love, and you get to see that they really enjoy working there because they love reading. As a reader, that's nice to see. That's the kind of stuff that I like the most on their Instagram.

Interviewer: What type of Barnes and Noble TikTok content do you think is most engaging?

Interviewee: I've seen TikTok content where they'll ask each of their employees at a Barnes & Noble to find a certain genre, such as their favorite comfort book or the funniest book they've read, and then the employee goes to find it in the store. The video will follow the employee retrieving the book. The audience gets to see each of the picks of each employee, and then they choose if they want to buy the book. The TikToks show you where it is in the store, and then the employees tell you a little bit about the book and why they picked it, which influences me to come into the store and buy it. So, I think those videos are the most successful for the TikTok account.

Interviewer: Thank you, once again, for your time and participation in this study. If there's anything I can answer in the future regarding this research, feel free to reach out at easchaib@asu.edu.

Appendix C: Survey

Question 1

Consent - Thank you for participating in this survey. My name is Elizabeth Schaible and I'm an ASU student at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication. For my class on strategic communication research methods, I am conducting a survey about Barnes & Noble. I'd like to hear from people who are under the age of 25. Please only participate if you are 18 or older. This 25-question survey will take you around 5-10 minutes to complete. Your participation is completely voluntary. Your information will be kept anonymous and used for class purposes only. Thank you for your time and if you have any questions about my research, you can contact me at easchaib@asu.edu.

- I agree to take this survey.
- I do not agree to take this survey.

Question 2

Have you purchased a book from Barnes & Noble in the past year?

- Yes
- No

Question 3

How old are you?

- Under 18
- 18-24 years old
- 25-34 years old
- 35-44 years old
- 45-54 years old
- 55-64 years old
- 65+ years old

Question 4

Which of the following social media platforms have you used in the past six months?
Select all that apply.

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Pinterest
- Snapchat
- TikTok
- X (formerly known as Twitter)

Question 5

How important do you think social media is for advertising and promoting books?

- Extremely Unimportant
- Unimportant
- Neither important nor unimportant
- Important
- Extremely Important

Question 6

How likely are you to purchase a book you have seen promoted by booksellers on social media?

- Extremely unlikely
- Unlikely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Likely
- Extremely Likely

Question 7

How likely are you to learn about books on the following social media platforms?

- Facebook = Extremely unlikely, Unlikely, Neither likely nor unlikely, Likely, Extremely Likely
- Instagram = Extremely unlikely, Unlikely, Neither likely nor unlikely, Likely, Extremely Likely

- Pinterest = Extremely unlikely, Unlikely, Neither likely nor unlikely, Likely, Extremely Likely
- Snapchat = Extremely unlikely, Unlikely, Neither likely nor unlikely, Likely, Extremely Likely
- TikTok = Extremely unlikely, Unlikely, Neither likely nor unlikely, Likely, Extremely Likely
- X (formerly known as Twitter) = Extremely unlikely, Unlikely, Neither likely nor unlikely, Likely, Extremely Likely

Question 8

Has Instagram ever influenced you to purchase a book?

- Yes
- No

Question 9

Has TikTok ever influenced you to purchase a book?

- Yes
- No

Question 10

Do you follow any Barnes & Noble social media accounts? If yes, which ones? Select all that apply.

- Instagram
- TikTok
- Facebook
- X (formerly known as Twitter)
- I do not follow any Barnes & Noble social media accounts.

Question 11

Which Barnes & Noble social media account do you think is most effective?

- Instagram

- TikTok
- Facebook
- X (formerly known as Twitter)

Question 12

Have you ever seen TikToks advertising or promoting a book?

- Yes
- No
- I do not have TikTok.

Question 13

Have you heard of #BookTok?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Question 14

#BookTok is a community on TikTok that discusses and promotes books. How often do you see #BookTok TikToks on your feed?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Frequently
- All the time

Question 15

I've found #BookTok to be a good way to find new books to read.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree

- Strongly disagree

Question 16

I trust #BookTok to give book recommendations that I will enjoy.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 17

How likely are you to purchase a book that is displayed on a stand in Barnes & Noble?

- Extremely unlikely
- Unlikely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Likely
- Extremely Likely

Question 18

Have you seen a #BookTok stand at a Barnes & Noble?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Question 19

Have you ever purchased a book from a #BookTok stand at a Barnes & Noble?

- Yes
- No

Question 20

Do the #BookTok stands in stores influence you to purchase books at Barnes & Noble?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Question 21

Do you believe the #BookTok stands add relevance to Barnes & Noble's book displays?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Question 22

Do you prefer to purchase books online or in-person?

- Online
- In-person
- I have no preference

Question 23

Which factor(s) best describes your reasoning for purchasing books online?

- Price
- Convenience
- More book options
- Other

Question 24

Which factor(s) best describes your reasoning for purchasing books in-person?

- Price

- Bookstore environment
- Ability to see and feel books
- Other

Question 25

How likely are you to buy a book from...

- A physical Barnes & Noble store = Extremely unlikely, Unlikely, Neither likely nor unlikely, Likely, Extremely Likely
- Online through the Barnes & Noble website = Extremely unlikely, Unlikely, Neither likely nor unlikely, Likely, Extremely Likely

Question 26

How do you describe yourself?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary / third gender
- Prefer to self-describe
- Prefer not to say

Appendix D: Memos 1 - 4

BARNES & NOBLE

Memo 1

To: James Daunt, CEO, Barnes & Noble

From: Elizabeth Schaible, Communication Specialist

CC: Nikki McClaran

Date: September 15, 2023

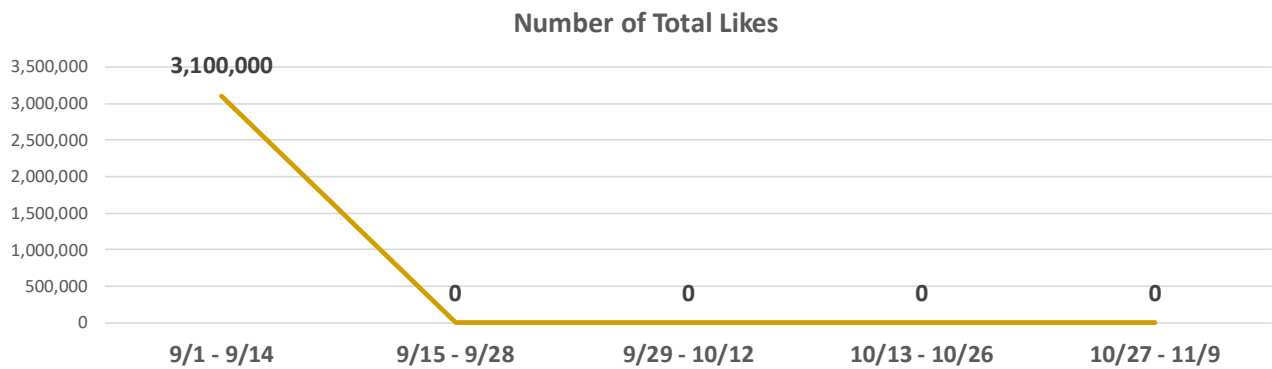
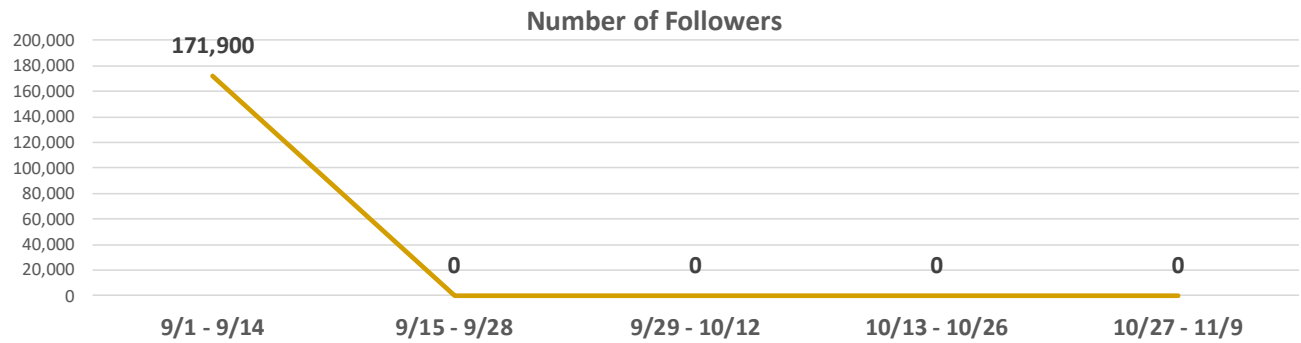
Re: Bi-weekly Research Report for September 1 - September 14, 2023

Overview

Barnes & Noble's TikTok account, @bnbuzz, posted 20 videos from September 1 to September 14. These videos were evaluated quantitatively and qualitatively by the research team. The post with the highest amount of engagement encouraged audience participation and included various employees. In the 14 days, 13 of the 20 videos (65%) included trending TikTok audio tracks to promote various genres of books or specific deals happening in stores. Other content included short author interviews and animated book promotions. Overall, the tone on Barnes & Noble's TikTok content is comedic and lighthearted.

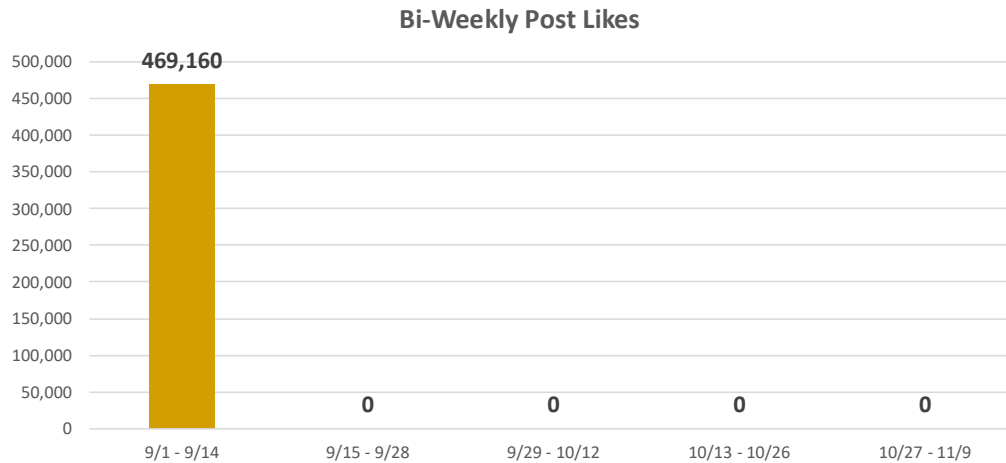
Barnes & Noble's TikTok Account (@bnbuzz)

Barnes & Noble has approximately 171,900 followers on TikTok and is following 1,358 accounts, as of Sept. 15. There is a link to BN.com in the TikTok biography, allowing for easy access for consumers to browse merchandise and make purchases. TikTok does not list how many total posts an account has, but instead offers a cumulative total of likes an account has generated. As of Sept. 15, Barnes & Noble's account has accumulated 3.1 million likes.

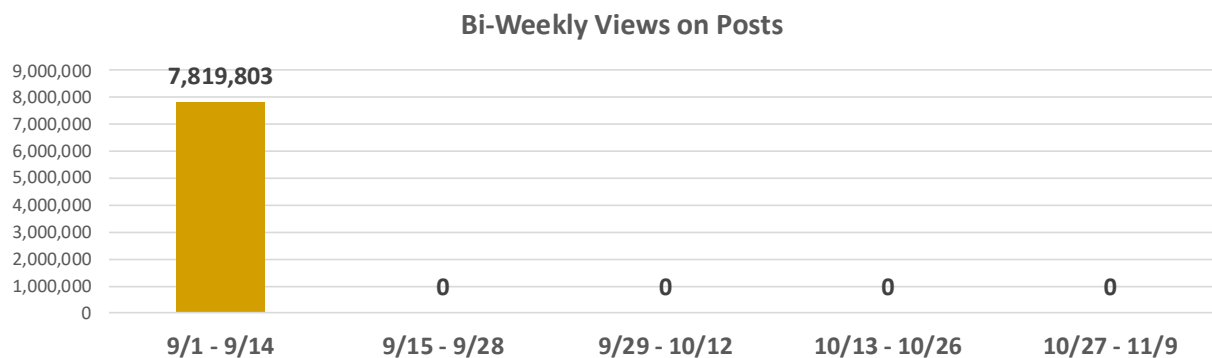
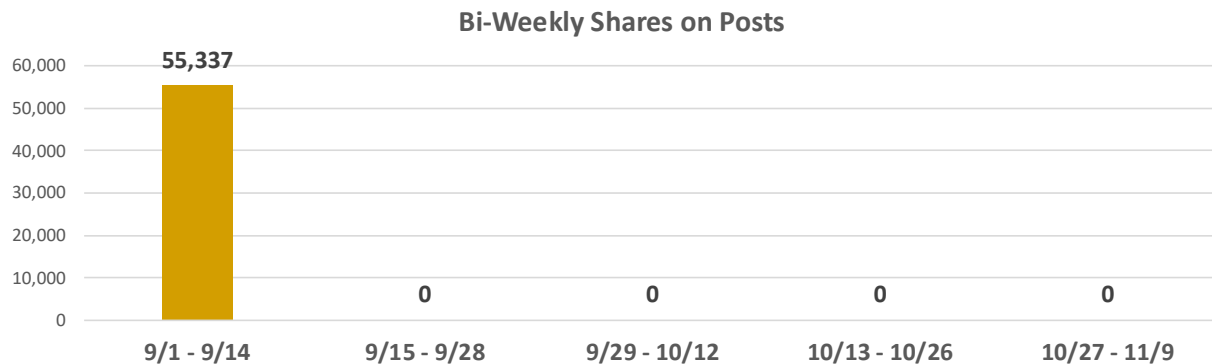


Views, Likes, Comments, and Shares

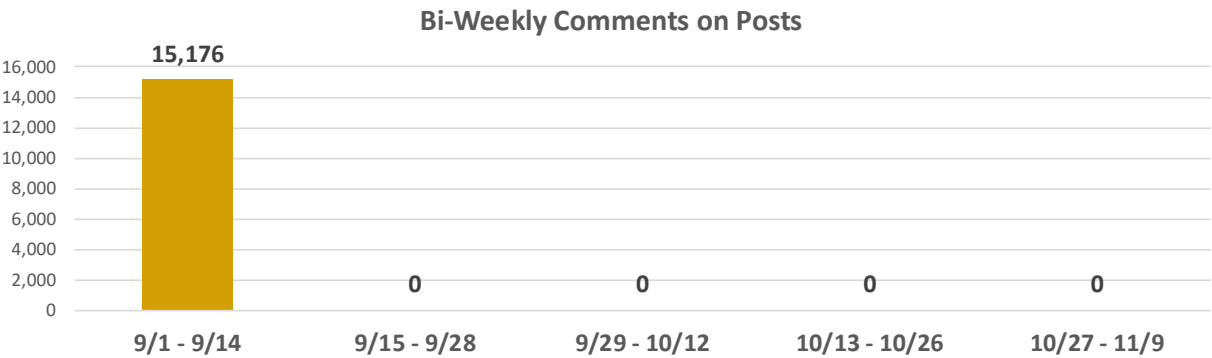
The 20 videos posted from September 1 to September 14 garnered 469,160 likes, 55,337 shares, 15,176 comments, and 7,819,803 views. In comparison with the other posts in this time frame, one video went viral and achieved 7.4 million views with over 455,000 likes. This video was the third part of a recent series that features a Barnes & Noble employee saying different names with the intention that if a viewer has one of the mentioned names, their friend “owes them a book.” This post had the most likes, shares, comments, and views out of all the videos included in this time frame.

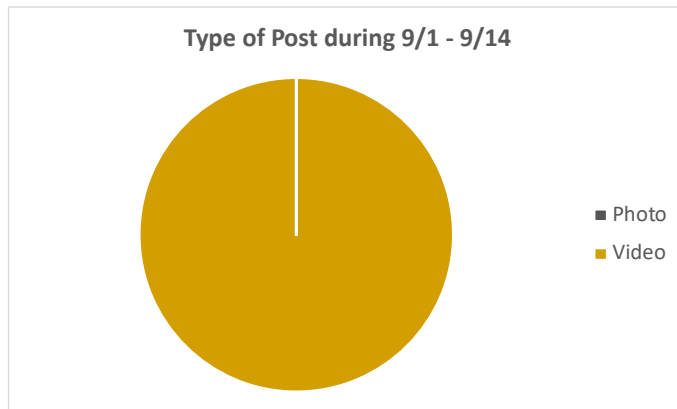


One video lasted over a minute, three videos lasted under a minute, and 16 videos lasted 30 seconds or less. There is at least one hashtag included in every caption to effectively categorize the books being promoted in these posts. Posts included hashtags featuring variants of #BookTok, including #youngadultbooktok and #fantasybooktok.



Many of the comments on Barnes & Noble’s posts contain questions or comments from consumers about book recommendations. Users will also comment their favorite books or respond to a question proposed to users in a TikTok caption (see example below).





TikTok is a social media platform designed for posting videos, however, pictures can be posted in a video format where users slide through the images. Barnes & Noble did not utilize this feature in the last two weeks, meaning all 20 posts were strictly videos. It is worth noting that Barnes & Noble has local TikTok accounts that post similar content to the singular, corporate account. The communication team will continue monitoring Barnes & Noble's TikTok statistics to better understand the account's engagement rates and viral content.

BARNES & NOBLE

Memo 2

To: James Daunt, CEO, Barnes & Noble

From: Elizabeth Schaible, Communication Specialist

CC: Nikki McClaran

Date: September 29, 2023

Re: Bi-weekly Research Report for September 15 – September 28, 2023

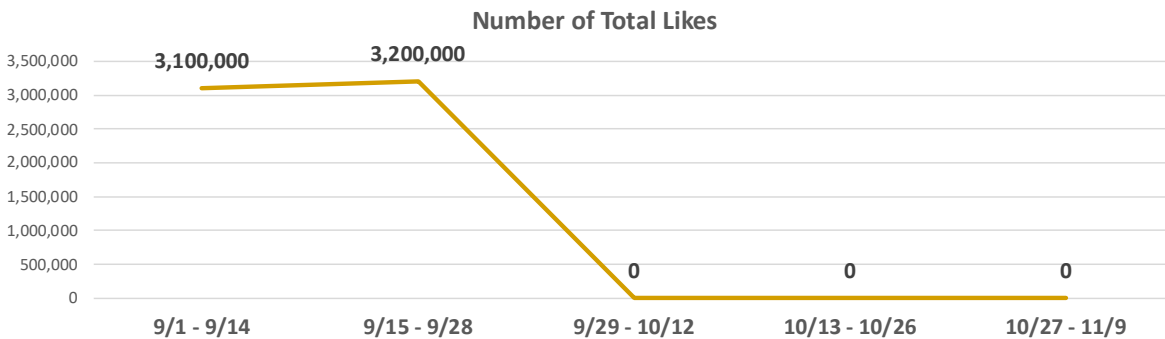
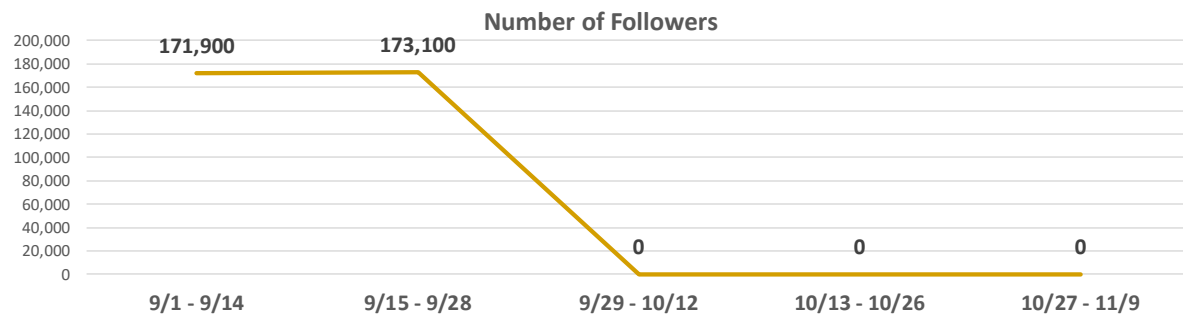
Overview

Barnes & Noble's TikTok account, @bnbuzz, posted 29 times from Sept. 15, 2023 to Sept. 28, 2023. These posts were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively by the Barnes & Noble research team and were compared to the TikToks posted from Sept. 1, 2023, to Sept. 14, 2023.

Of the 29 TikToks, one was posted in a TikTok photo format, and the others were posted as videos. Six of the 29 posts were part of an author takeover with author Aparna Verma. Barnes & Noble's post frequency increased by 45% compared to the last period, and the account saw a 0.7% follower increase.

Barnes & Noble's TikTok Account (@bnbuzz)

As of Sept. 29, Barnes & Noble's TikTok account has accumulated approximately 3.2 billion total likes, a 3.2% increase from last period, and has more than 173,100 followers, a 0.7% increase.

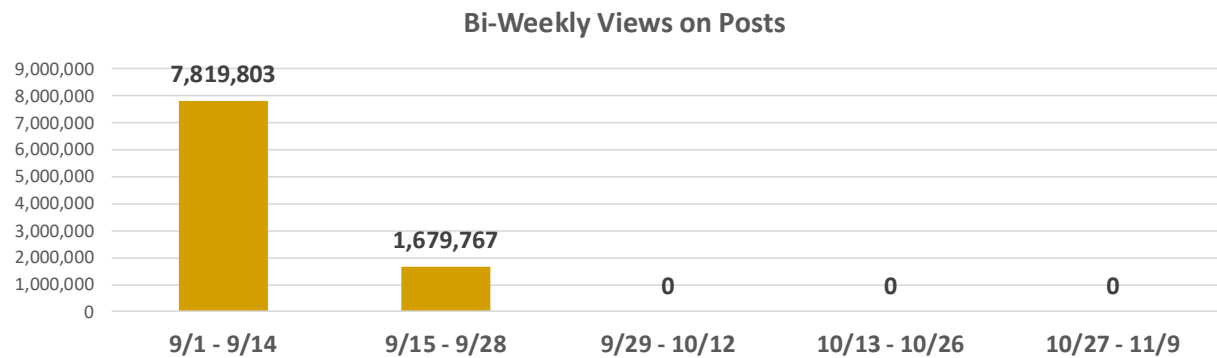
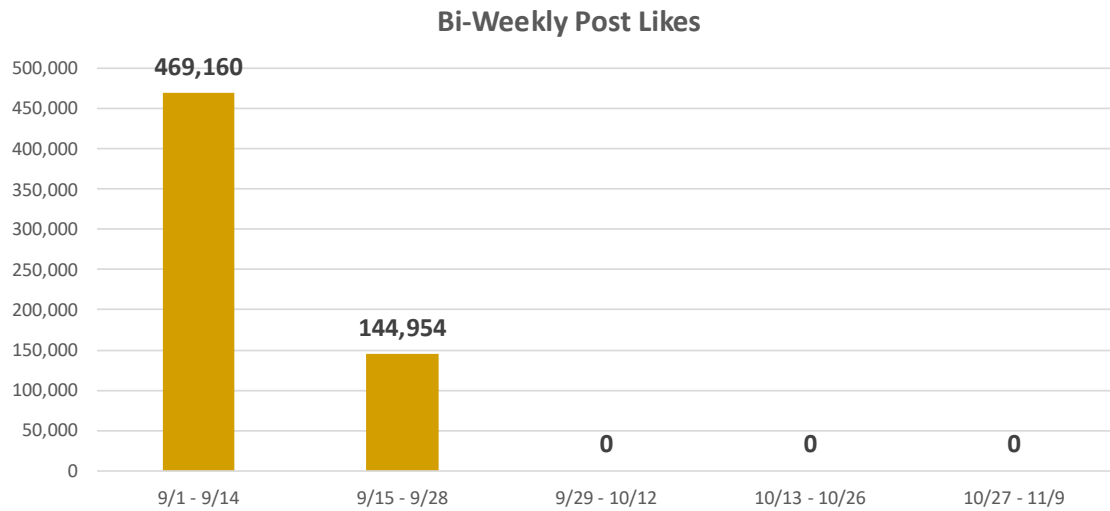


The 29 posts in the last two weeks received 144,954 likes, which is a 69% decrease from the previous report. These posts cumulatively garnered 1,679,767 views, resulting in a 78.5% decrease.

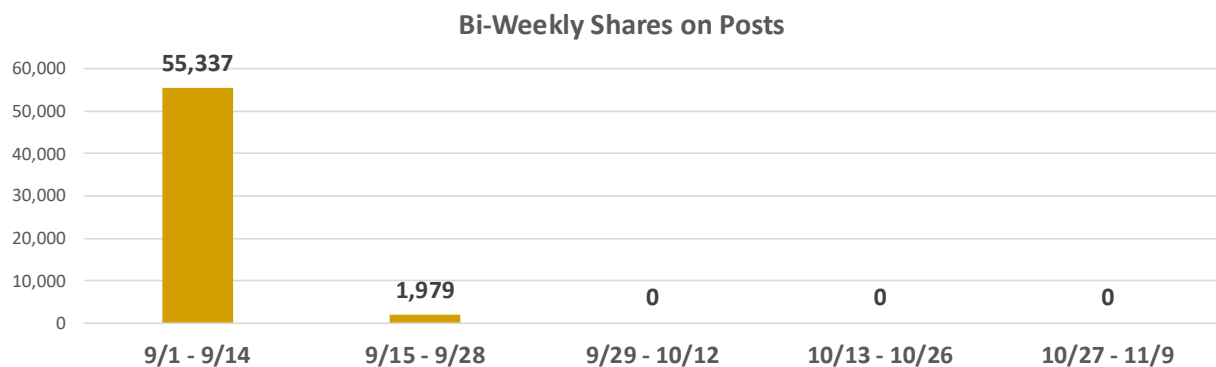
The post that received the most engagement at 965,100 views and 82,700 likes was a sentimental video that featured an author surprising guests at a Barnes & Noble store. This post received 138% less likes compared with the top-liked post from last report. In terms of views, this post received 154% less views the videos in prior period. This video was posted during the author takeover with Aparna Verma.

The post that achieved the second-highest number of likes was part four of the “If we say your name, your friend owes you a book” series. This post received 34,400 likes, which is a 92.6% decrease from part three of this series that was posted in the previous period.

The TikTok posted in the photo format received 28,000 views and 3,170 likes. This post was the fourth most-liked post of the period, and it included elements of a popular TikTok trend that features people explaining their tattoos. In the caption, the hashtags #bnbuzz, #barnesandnoble, and #tattoo were used to categorize this video. All those posts in this period used hashtags in the captions, which is consistent with all the posts from the previous report.

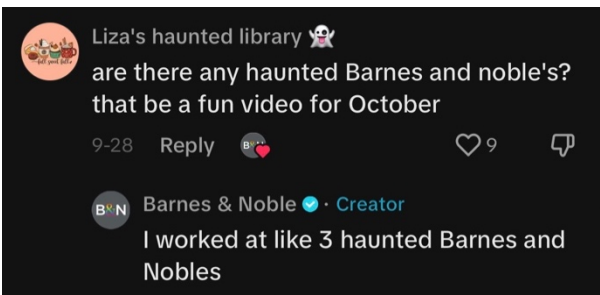
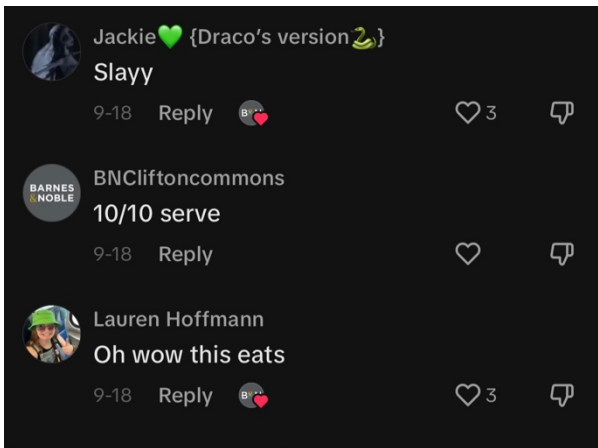
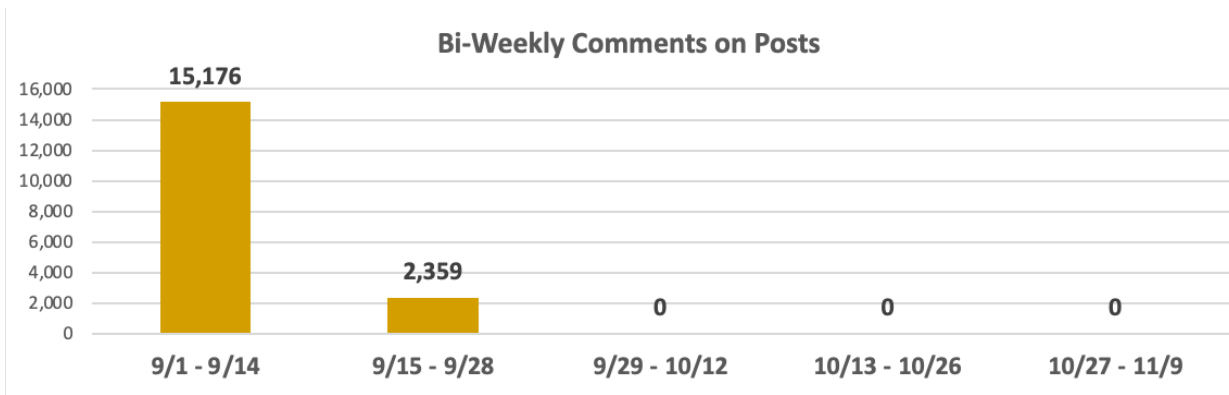


Barnes & Noble received 1,979 shares for the posts within the last two weeks. This is a 96.4% decrease compared with the last report. The top-shared videos of this report and last report are both posts from the “If we say your name, your friend owes you a book” series.

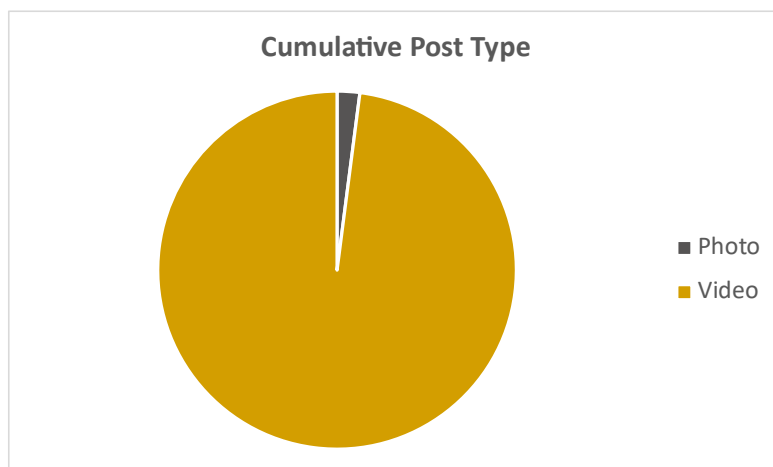
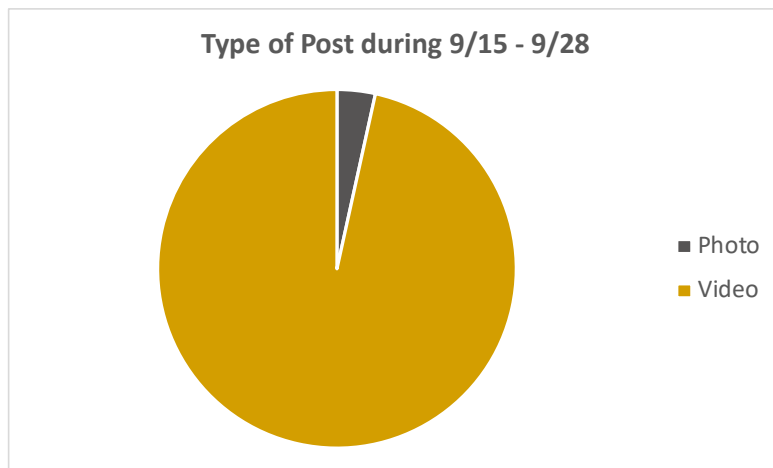


Barnes & Noble accumulated 2,359 comments for the 29 posts in the last two weeks. Overall, this is an 84.5% decrease. Part four of the “If we say your name, your friend owes you a book” series received 2,037 comments, the highest number of comments a video received during this period. The top-liked post for this period did not match the video with the highest number of comments.

Barnes & Noble liked and responded to user comments, which is new behavior since last report. Many of the comments are positive, either complimenting a video’s creativity or adding to the discussion surrounding the video’s topic.



Barnes & Noble posted 9 more TikToks in the last two weeks than in the prior period. This increased the account’s post frequency by 45%, but the total engagement for this period was down 76.9% compared to the last, according to Rival IQ. Barnes & Noble has cumulatively posted 49 times within the last two periods, and only one of those posts has been in the TikTok photo format.



Conclusion

In everything except post frequency and the total number of followers and likes, Barnes & Noble's TikTok account saw large percentage decreases in engagement this period. Videos posted from Sept. 1 to Sept. 14 accumulated more likes, views, shares, and comments than the videos in the last two weeks.

One of the videos in the "If we say your name, your friend owes you a book" series featured in the last period went viral, gaining over seven million views, which heavily impacted total engagement. None of the videos in the last two weeks reached over one million views, ultimately reducing audience engagement for this period.

The research team will continue monitoring Barnes & Noble's TikTok statistics throughout the next few months to better understand the account's engagement rates and viral content.

BARNES & NOBLE

Memo 3

To: James Daunt, CEO, Barnes & Noble

From: Elizabeth Schaible, Communication Specialist

CC: Nikki McClaran

Date: October 13, 2023

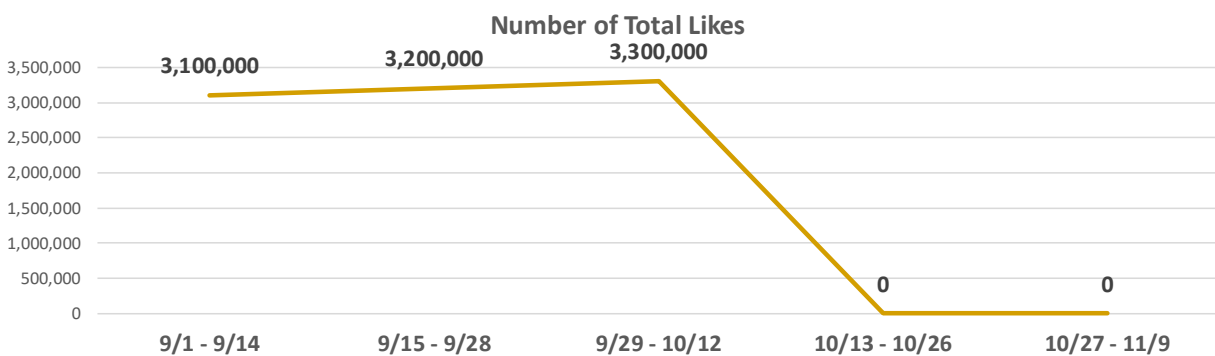
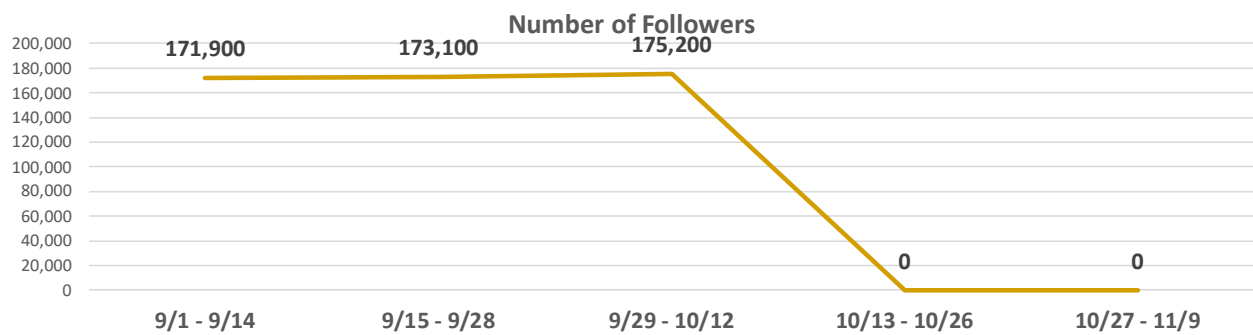
Re: Bi-weekly Research Report for September 29 - October 12, 2023

Overview

The Barnes & Noble TikTok account posted 20 videos from Sept. 29 to Oct. 12, a 31% decrease in posts compared to the 29 videos from Sept. 15 to Sept. 28. These 20 videos were quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed by the Barnes & Noble research team. Half of the videos posted in the last two weeks included themes surrounding October, Halloween, or fall. This is a change from the content posted in September and is more catered toward the season. During these two weeks, it was found that one video did not garner the most collective engagement, but rather the videos with the most likes, views, shares, and comments all differed.

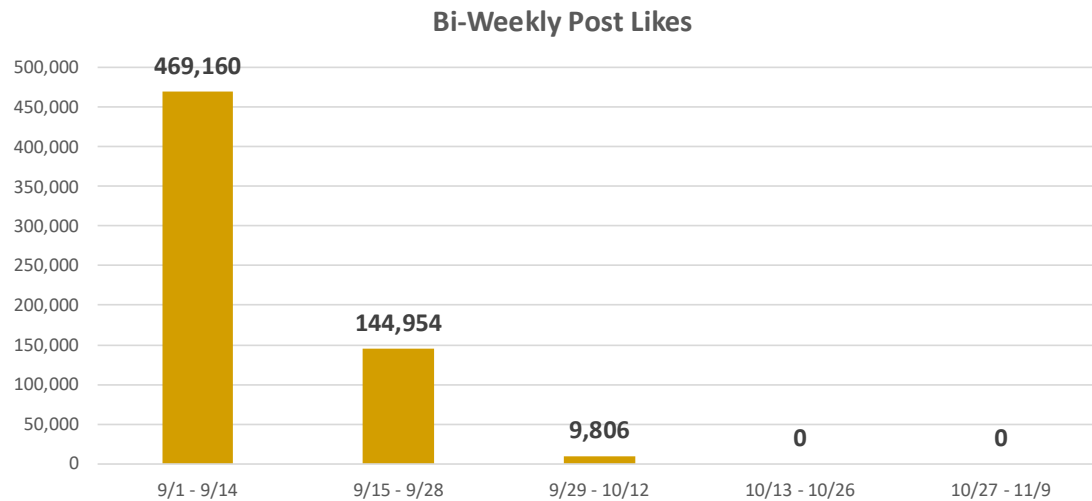
Barnes & Noble's TikTok Account (@bnbuzz)

As of Oct. 13, @bnbuzz on TikTok has approximately 175,200 followers, a 1.2% increase from the prior period, and is following 1,449 accounts. The account has accumulated over 3.3 million likes, increasing its total likes by 3.1%.

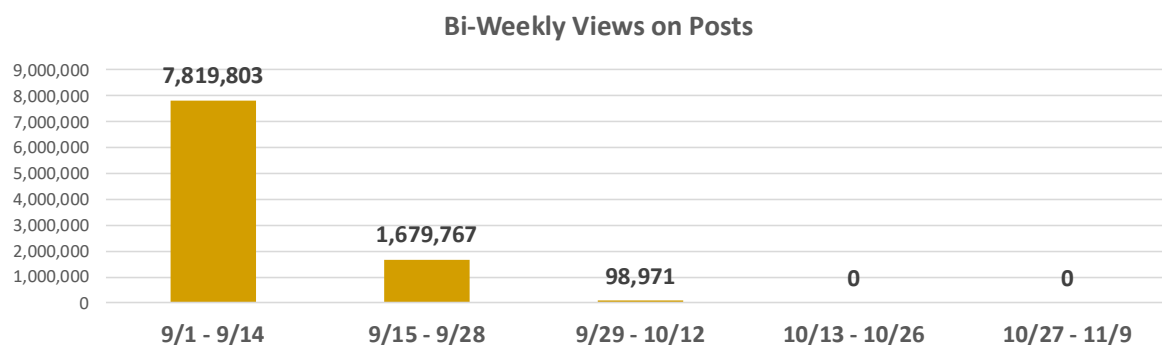


Barnes & Noble received 9,806 likes for its 20 TikTok posts in the last two weeks. This is a 93.2% decrease compared to the videos from Sept. 15 to Sept. 28.

The average number of likes per post for this period was 490.3, and the top-liked post received 1,532 likes. This video featured an employee saying that she wants to stop buying books, and then pointing to various books in a Barnes & Noble store and lip-syncing to a sound that says, "You're a real, real problem." The caption references the song "Anti-Hero" by Taylor Swift and begins with "It's me, hi!" Compared to the viral top-liked post from the previous period, this video received 193% less likes and did not go viral, therefore reducing its number of views and likes.

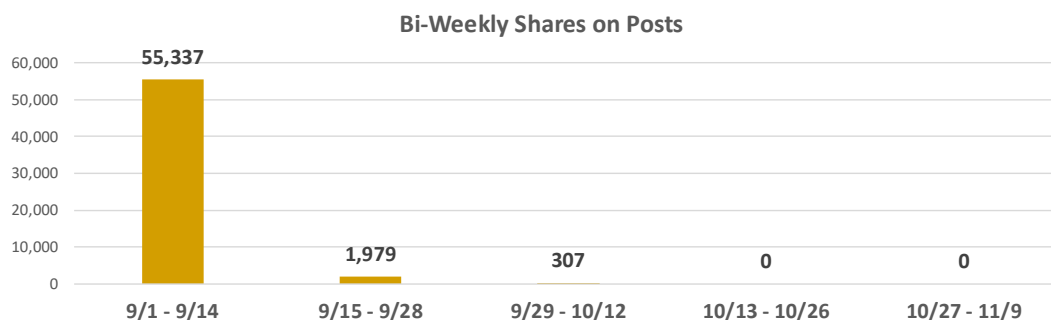


The video that garnered the most views differed from the post with the most likes, which is not usually the norm compared to previous data. The top-viewed post received 12,900 views, 194.7% less views from the last period, and was the second most-liked post within the last two weeks. This video featured an employee advertising a Barnes & Noble membership using a popular audio track that has been used with more than 6,000 posts. The average number of views per post in this time frame was 4,948.6, and the least-viewed post had 370 views. A spooky book recommendation video received 12,000 views, which was the most-viewed post of the autumn-centered content posted in the last two weeks.



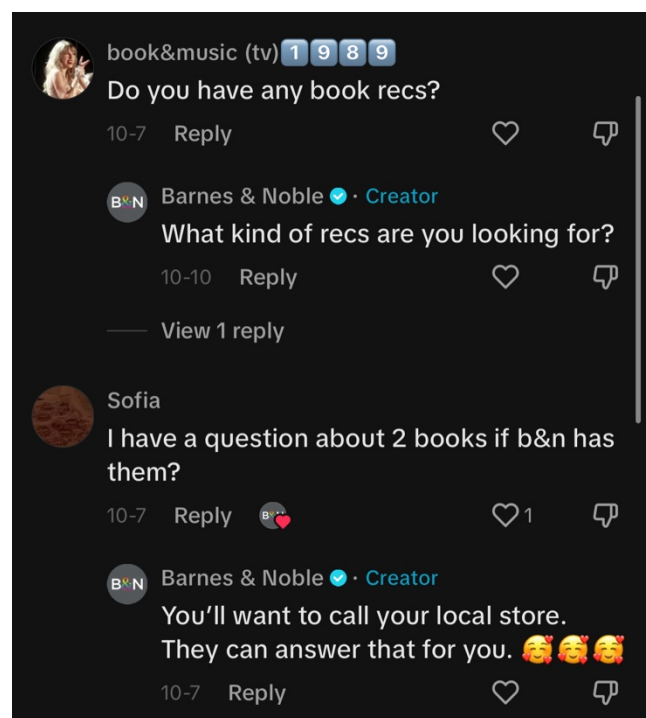
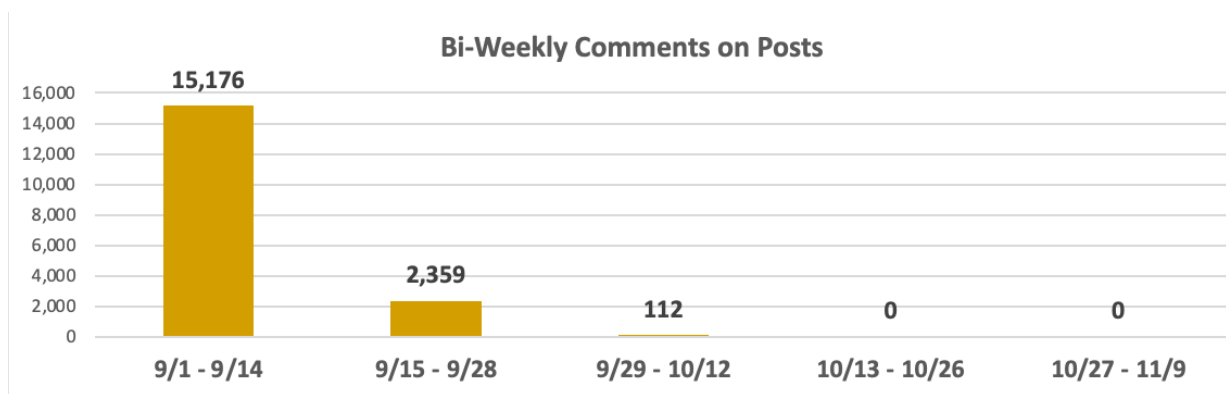
The 20 posts received 307 shares, resulting in an 84.5% decrease from the prior time frame. The post with the most shares was neither the top-liked nor the top-viewed post in the last two weeks. This meme video had 39 shares and featured a cut-out of popular TV figure Mr. Rogers saying "I'm proud of you, you know that. I hope you do." The caption on the video stated, "Me to myself after finally reading a book I

bought three months ago.” The tone of this post is very comedic and relatable, which could contribute to the high number of shares, even though this post only had 5,336 views and 710 likes. The average number of shares per post in the last two weeks was 15.4, a 77.4% decrease from Sept. 15 to Sept. 28.

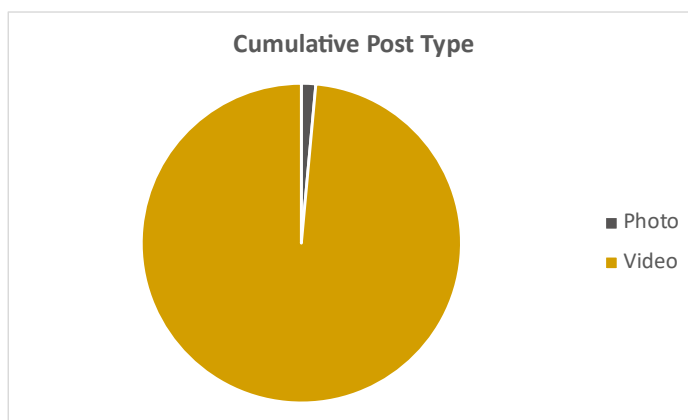
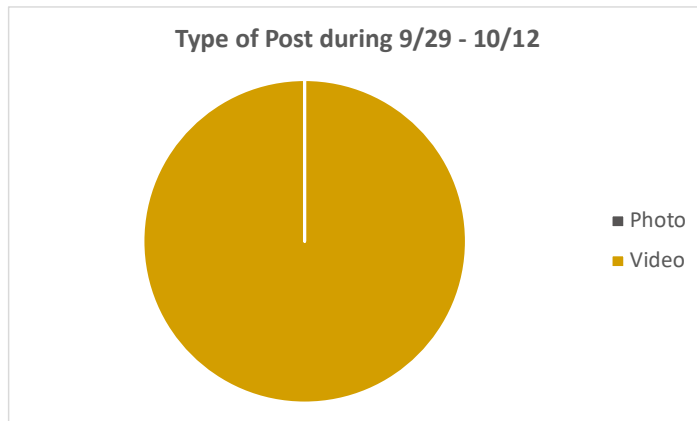


In total, the posts for this time frame received 112 comments, 2,247 comments less than number from Sept. 15 to Sept. 28. The video with highest number of comments was a #stitch duet video that featured an employee drinking a coffee from the Barnes & Noble café. The original stitch video asked #BookTok readers whether they are Dunkin’ Donuts or Starbucks coffee bookworms. The comments on this video either expressed support for the Barnes & Noble café or answered the original question of whether they drink Starbucks or Dunkin’ Donuts coffee. Some comments tagged @Bobby’sReading, the account with the stitched video. There were no video stitch duets posted from Sept. 15 to Sept. 28.

Other videos that included seasonal themes received few comments. A post advertising fall fantasy books had 0 comments, along with a post using an October audio track. The average number of comments per post was 5.6, which is 75.7 comments fewer than the previous two weeks, resulting in a 92.6% decrease. Keeping consistent with the prior month, Barnes & Noble continues to engage with users in the comments by answering questions and posting positive replies.



Barnes & Noble did not utilize the TikTok photo feature in the last two weeks, meaning all 20 posts were in a video format. Cumulatively, Barnes & Noble has posted 69 times since media tracking began on Sept. 15.



Conclusion

Barnes & Noble's engagement heavily decreased in the last two weeks in all areas except total likes and followers. Comments, likes, shares, and views on individual posts had percentage decreases, and none of the posts achieved viral status or received over one million views. Although half of the posts from Sept. 29 to Oct. 12 included autumn themes, none of the fall content videos received the highest engagement numbers for likes, comments, views, or shares. The research team will continue monitoring Barnes & Noble's TikTok statistics throughout the next month to better understand the account's engagement rates and viral content.

BARNES & NOBLE

Memo 4

To: James Daunt, CEO, Barnes & Noble

From: Elizabeth Schaible, Communication Specialist

CC: Nikki McClaran

Date: October 27, 2023

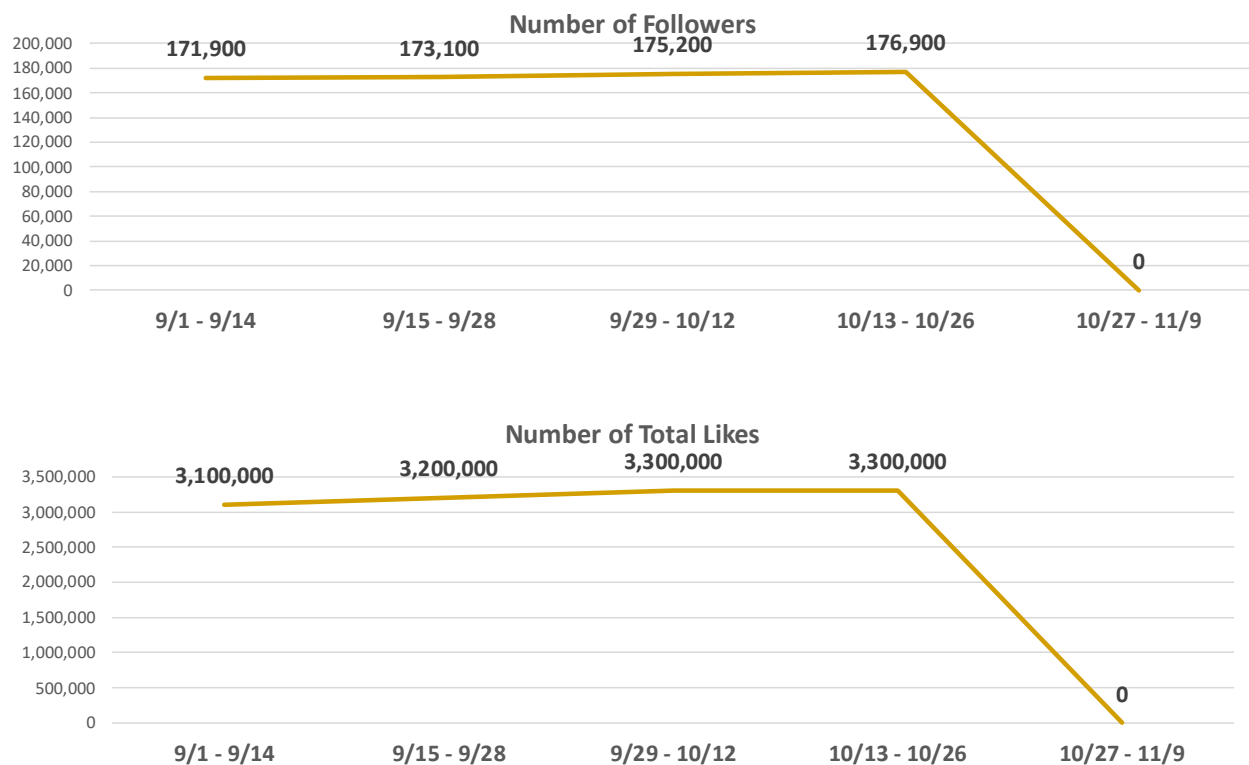
Re: Bi-weekly Research Report for October 13 - October 26, 2023

Overview

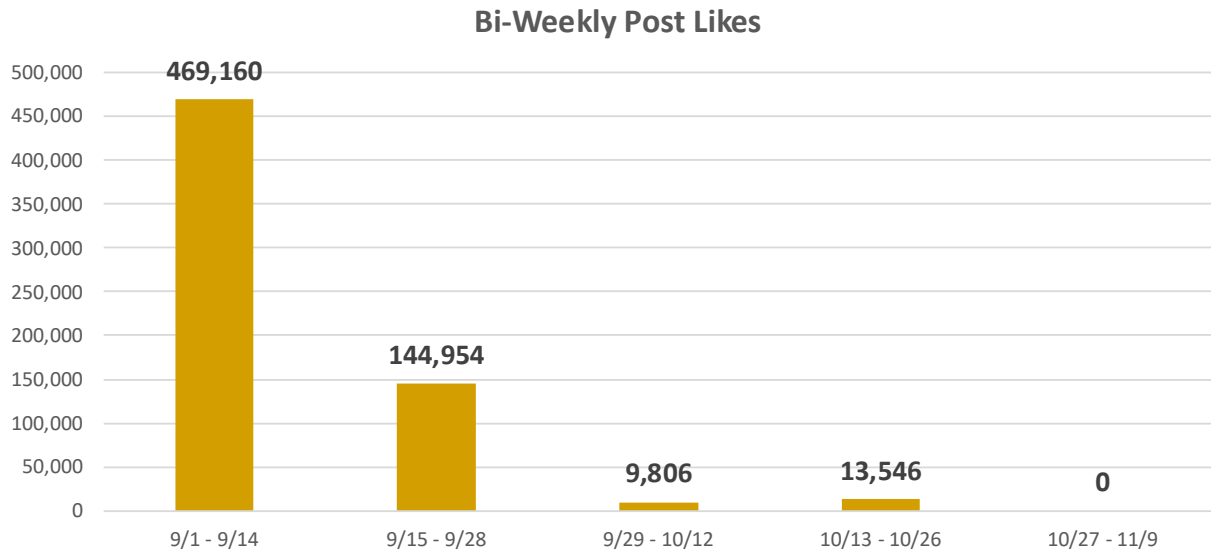
The Barnes & Noble TikTok account posted 17 times from Oct. 13 to Oct. 26, a 15% decrease in post frequency compared to the 20 videos from Sept. 29 to Oct. 12. These posts were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively by the Barnes & Noble research team. Overall, the content posted in the last two weeks was comedic and creative, featuring employees lip-syncing to popular audio trends and memes advertising new books. The TikTok that received the most views was posted in a photo format and did not receive the most likes or comments. Over half of the videos posted in the last weeks included a specific book recommendation or highlight.

Barnes & Noble's TikTok Account (@bnbuzz)

As of Oct. 27, Barnes & Noble has approximately 176,900 followers on TikTok, a 0.97% increase from the prior period, and is following 1,472 accounts. In total, Barnes & Noble has accumulated 3.3 million likes, a 0% change from Sept. 29 to Oct. 12.

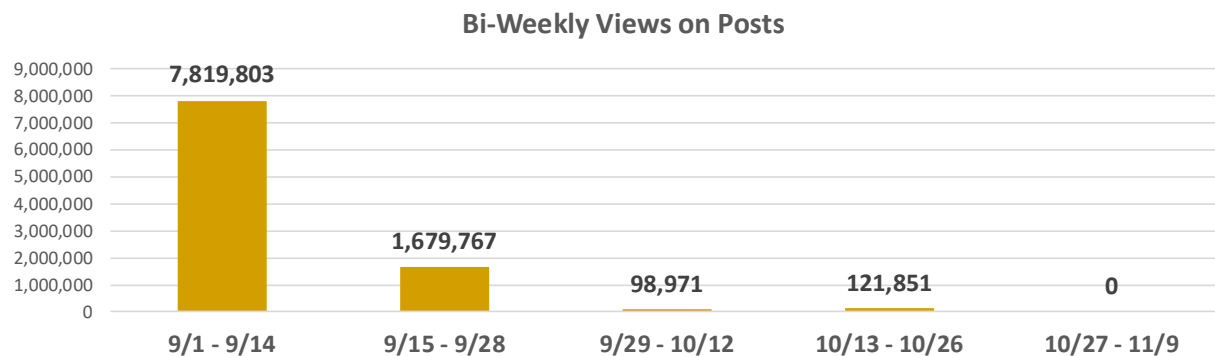


For its 17 posts in the last two weeks, the Barnes & Noble TikTok account received 13,546 likes, a 38.1% increase compared to the videos from the previous period. The average number of likes per post for these videos was 796.8, a 62.5% increase in the average number of video likes from Sept. 29 to Oct. 12. The most-liked post received 2,562 likes and featured an employee spotlighting *The Song of Achilles* by Madeline Miller. The audio track and video text were bold and humorous, stating “I can’t stop thinking about those tragic little gay men... they consume my every waking thought.” Compared to the top-liked post of last period, this video received 50.3% more likes, but did not reach viral status.

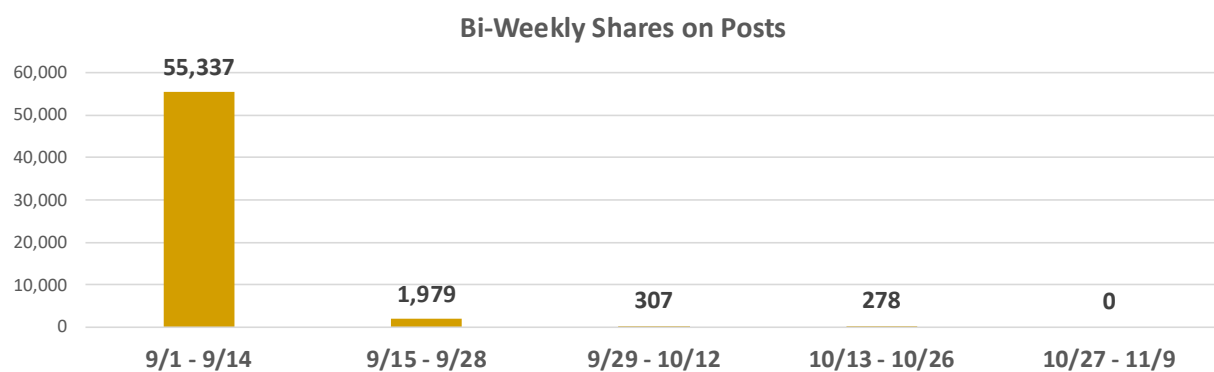


In total, Barnes & Noble's TikTok account received 121,851 views for its 17 posts in the last two weeks, a 23.1% increase from the 98,971 total views last period. The post that received the highest number of views differed than the video with the most likes and comments. This post, featuring a photo collage of new book releases, garnered approximately 23,000 views, earning 56.3% more views than the top-viewed post of the prior period. Nine photos were included in this post, each with short text descriptions that described each spotlighted book. The popular audio track used in this post has been featured in over 149,000 TikToks, which could have potentially contributed to the high number of views.

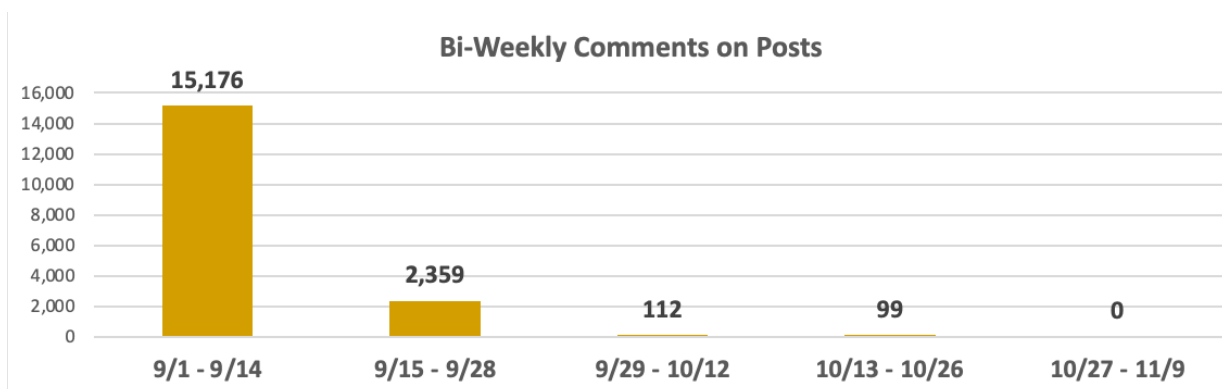
The average number of views for the posts in this period was 7,167.8, a 44.8% increase compared to the average from Sept. 29 to Oct. 12.



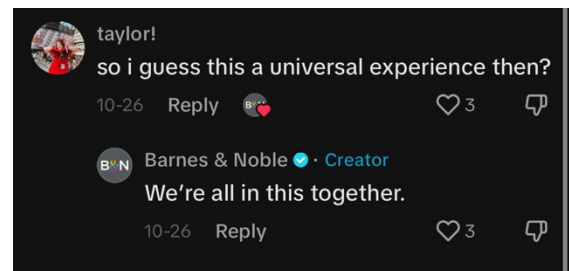
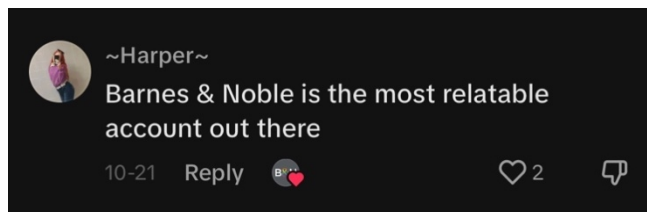
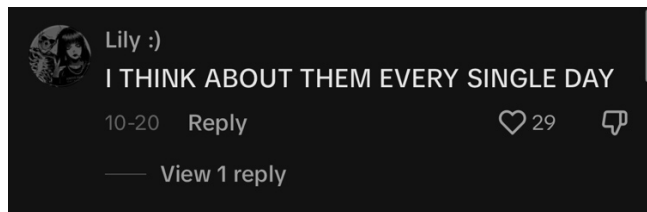
Barnes & Noble's TikTok account received 278 total shares on its posts from Oct. 13 to Oct. 26. This is a 9.4% decrease from the total shares garnered in the last period. The video with the highest number of shares featured an employee advertising a "rare sale" where consumers can Buy One, Get One 50% Off all Manga products. The video was posted on the day the sale was set to end. The timeliness and prevalence could have contributed to the high number of shares, especially since the content had the direct ability to affect the audience. This video received 79 shares, 17.3% less shares than the top-shared post of the prior period. The average number of shares per video in the last two weeks was 16.4.



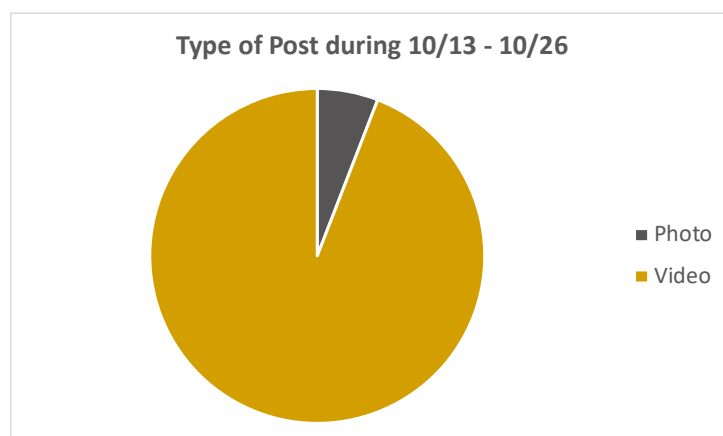
In total, the account received 99 comments for its 17 posts from Oct. 13 to Oct. 26, resulting in an 11.6% decrease compared to the 20 posts from last period. The post with the most comments also received the highest number of likes. Overall, the comments on this video were positive, expressing support for the account and agreeing with the specific piece of content.

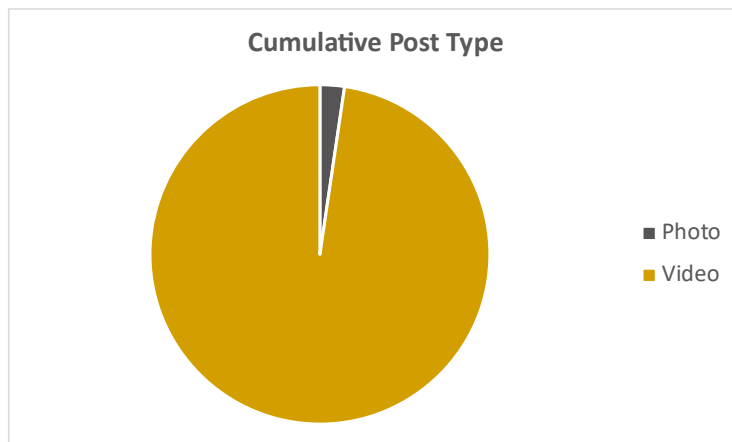


This video received 30 comments, nine more than the highest number from Sept. 29 to Oct. 12. The average number of comments per post was 5.8. Keeping consistent with last period, Barnes & Noble liked and replied to comments, encouraging engagement and audience participation on posts. However, the account only replied to two comments on all 17 posts, which could have contributed to the lower number of total comments for this period compared to the last.



Barnes & Noble utilized the TikTok photo format on one post in the last two weeks, while the other 16 posts were videos. Cumulatively, the account has posted 86 times since tracking began, with two posts featured in the photo format.





Conclusion

Compared to the prior period, Barnes & Noble increased its number of followers and had higher engagement totals with likes and views for the posts within the last two weeks. The company faced percentage decreases in shares and comments and kept a stagnant number of total, accumulated likes. The majority of analyzed posts featured book highlights and recommendations, such as the top-viewed post of this period, while other videos used comical, cheeky audio tracks, such as the top-liked post. The research team will continue monitoring Barnes & Noble's TikTok statistics throughout the next month to better understand the account's engagement rates and viral content.