



**Universitat  
Pompeu Fabra**  
*Barcelona*

**Fan content within the YA/NA BookTok  
Community and its influence on the publishing  
industry: The case of *The Hunger Games* and  
ACOTAR**

Lara Díaz Ardiaca

**Supervisor:** Dr. Mar Guerrero-Pico

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**Department of Communication**

**Universitat Pompeu Fabra**

## Modality A. Basic research — PhD proposal

### **Abstract**

The literary fan community has been around for quite some time, but with the emergence of social media, it has been revolutionised. Specifically, from TikTok has emerged BookTok, the sub-community in which only books are discussed, mainly those of the YA/NA genre, which generally corresponds to the works targeted to the 12-25 age group. In particular, it will focus on the cases of *The Hunger Games* and ACOTAR. As fans have evolved, so has the industry, with a need to embrace these new readers who are guided by the recommendations of an algorithm.

This project aims to analyse the fan content published by the participants of the BookTok community and observe how their dynamics work. Simultaneously, it explores the publishing industry and how BookTok practices can influence companies' decisions. This is intended to be accomplished through a qualitative approach, combining two methodologies. Firstly, it will involve a textual analysis, which will examine the fan content retrieved from BookTok through a series of semiotic categories. Secondly, a digital (auto)ethnography, which will entail a participation observation and semi-structured interviews, analysed using a thematic analysis.

### **Keywords**

BookTok, fan content, fandom, publishing industry, Young Adult (YA), New Adult (NA), literary fandom, online community, booktokers.

## Introduction

Recently, the publishing industry has experienced a change in the way it consumes. It no longer relies solely on traditional advertising, but social networks are once again demonstrating the power they have (Centuriosa, 2023). Publishers have concisely pinpointed their target audience and discovered that the best way to reach them, especially those in the Young Adult (YA) and New Adult (NA) demographics, is through TikTok, which is growing in popularity, and specifically the subcommunity dedicated to literature, BookTok (Felice, 2024).

This development already yields significant monetary results within the YA/NA industry. Thanks to BookTok, book sales have increased by about 25% in 2020 and 2021 (Kaplan, 2022). The YA subcommunity, in particular, has grown, accounting for about 5% of total sales, which translates into a dozen million dollars, making it the fastest growing category (Bateman, 2022).

According to Oxford Languages (n.d.), YA describes a teenager or a person in their early twenties. In literature, however, the YA age range generally focuses on works aimed at those between the ages of 12 and 18. However, the term YA is used hastily, as there is no formal definition (Dixon, 2023). Furthermore, it is usually grouped with NA, which focuses on 18-25 year olds (Pattee, 2017). Thus, YA/NA literature is mostly consumed by young readers, they constitute the vast majority of BookTok users, serving as a very active and highly influential fandom.

The purpose of this project is to provide an overview of the BookTok subcommunity and its members, as well as its influence on the publishing industry. Special emphasis will be placed on two of the most representative series of the genre: *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins and *A Court of Thorns and Roses* (ACOTAR) by Sarah J. Maas. Both have a highly developed worldbuilding: the former is a work of science fiction, while the latter is a work of fantasy and romance. The first main objective is to analyse fan content on BookTok, with a special focus on the two mentioned works; while the second main objective is to observe collaborative creation processes, community interactions and community practices, reviewing their influence on the publishing industry.

It is a fairly new concept, so not much research has been conducted on it. Likewise, the BookTok community is quite unique and hard to understand, unless one is already part of it in the first place. Similarly, the publishing industry is highly competitive and evolving, so providing reliable and accurate data on one of the largest genres in the literary market can be of great value.

# 1. Research design

The objectives and research questions of the work are organised as outlined below:

## **Main objectives**

1. To analyse fan content within the BookTok community, focusing on works such as *The Hunger Games* and ACOTAR.
2. To observe the collaborative creation processes, community interactions, and practices of the BookTok community, reviewing its influence on the publishing industry.

## **Specific objectives**

1. Categorise fan content within the BookTok community, focusing on works such as *The Hunger Games* and ACOTAR.
  - a. What are the main formats, genres, and their narrative characteristics?
  - b. What visual and audible elements are predominant in such fan content?
2. Identify patterns in tropes and values present in *The Hunger Games* and ACOTAR fan content on BookTok.
  - a. What are the main themes and tropes observed in fan content creation within *The Hunger Games* and ACOTAR fandoms on BookTok?
  - b. What values stand out in the fan content of *The Hunger Games* and ACOTAR on BookTok, and how do they influence fan-created stories?
3. Examine collaborative creation processes among BookTok users within *The Hunger Games* and ACOTAR fandoms to understand their impact on community dynamics.
  - a. How does the creation of fan content within *The Hunger Games* and ACOTAR fandoms on BookTok influence the community dynamics on the platform?
  - b. What are the motivations and incentives for users to participate in these creation processes?

4. Explore the fan content creation within BookTok on publishing trends and preferences, with a focus on works such as *The Hunger Games* and ACOTAR, to understand how fan-generated content influences decision-making processes in the publishing industry.
  - a. How does the creation of fan content within BookTok influence editorial trends and preferences, especially in relation to works such as *The Hunger Games* and ACOTAR?
  - b. How do publishers and authors engage with fandom creators on BookTok to leverage fan-generated content as an influence?

### 3. Theoretical framework

#### 3.1 Literary fandom

Literature has always been a source of pleasure, a conversation starter or a topic of debate. However, the concept of pleasurable reading has long since evolved from a mere pastime to a fanatical pursuit.

Several authors have mentioned the origin of literary fandoms, but many do so from the male point of view. Edwards (2018) reviews the different approaches to literary fandoms, pointing out how authors such as Blake (2012) and Eisner (2009) rely heavily on anachronistic examples to describe particular fandoms. They refer to fans as “crazy women” who are “hungry” and go out of their way to get close to authors. Granted, these depictions may seem old-fashioned and prejudiced, resembling a caricature.

The usage of the label ‘fan’ can be first found in the nineteenth century, when readers shifted from spectators to admirers (Duffett, 2013). At that time, the expression ‘fan’ was used for those who were interested in baseball and not in literature (Cavicchi, 2014). Early literary fandoms are credited to authors such as Arthur Conan Doyle for *Sherlock Holmes* (1892) and Mary Shelley for *Frankenstein* (1818). Sherlockians are acknowledged as one of the first fandoms, notably for their active protests over Holmes’ “death” in 1893 (Nussbaum, 2014).

Then, practices such as scrapbooking or letters to the editor were carried out (Brombley, 2017). However, it was not until the 1930s that the mass fan movement took off following the popularization of science fiction. This genre offered fans the chance to integrate themselves into stories, counterplots that blended futuristic, imaginary, and real elements.

Many believe that the father of modern science fiction fandom is Hugo Gernsback (1884-1967), a Belgian inventor who believed that science fiction was the ideal way to bring science to the general public. He therefore decided to create stories and distribute them through his own magazine, *Amazing Stories* (1926). He helped launch a literary genre, pulp fiction (Madison, 2021), which encouraged many to write and publish their own content. This marked the beginning of many fan works, such as fan fictions and fan arts (Gooch, 2008).

Consequently, from the 1960s onwards, this behaviour began to become more generalised, as did women's participation, although they were always labelled as mere groupies. Much of this situation was exacerbated by the appearance of the television series *Star Trek* (NBC, 1966-1969), where female fans were referred to as "Trekkies", as if they were simply infatuated with the men in the franchise (Jenkins, 2019). *Star Trek* has a large influence on fan content, as they are recognised as the creators of the *Star Trek* fanzine *Spockanalia*, the first fan fiction, which are works of fan-created fiction based on an already created narrative universe. (Garcia-Siino et al., 2022).

The first literary fan fiction emerged after Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. After its publication, readers wrote imaginary scenarios for the protagonist, as well as created illustrations, such as the engraving titled *The Punishment Inflicted on Lemuel Gulliver* by William Hogarth (Chamberlain, 2020). There is also Jean Rhys' novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*, written about Charlotte Brontë's classic *Jane Eyre*, but from a different point of view (Roozen et al., 2008).

Subsequently, the author of *Lord of the Rings*, J. R. R. Tolkien, also had a non-stop growing following whom he called "my deplorable cult", which became Tolkien's first fan club called "The Fellowship of the Ring". In August 1960, they themselves published their first fanzine, the fan magazine *i-Palantir*, which consisted of 17 pages with all sorts of fan creations (Lavezzo & Maldonado, 2023).

Ultimately, fan creation is a concept almost as old as literature and its fans. However, the phenomenon of literary fans has grown with the rise of the Internet and social media (Johnson, 2021), especially in the YA and NA community. Nevertheless, the genre is still fairly new due to its recent age differentiation. This youth community was fostered when in the 1930s young people had to stop working and keep studying; publishing houses saw a new group to feed. In 1942, Maureen Daly's *Seventeenth Summer* was published, a romantic novel that became a hit for capturing the teenage spirit, and was the beginning of YA literature.

The publishing industry saw the need for a new genre of books, although it did not take off until 1970-1980 (Marchese, 2018). Over time, it evolved into the YA and NA community we know today, associated with books such as J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* saga, Suzanne Collins' *Hunger Games* pentateuch, and the John Green phenomenon.

### 3.2 YA fandom and reading communities online

As mentioned previously, the literary fandom has been dramatically altered by the arrival of the internet. Social media and the web have succeeded in bringing fans closer together, creating unstoppable online communities that are becoming increasingly more and more influential (Coppa, 2013). The following section is a glimpse into the various phases of the internet and how online communities and fandoms have evolved in each of these phases.

#### 3.2.1 *The origins of the YA/NA fandom on the Web*

Writer Howard Rheingold (1993) argued that social communities emerge from the internet when enough people hold discussions for long enough with emotion to form meaningful online relationships. When the web was launched, genuine online spaces were created to bring together those with common interests, creating a supportive community of fans. The dawn of the internet fandom began with formats such as bulletin boards services, mailing lists, Usenet newsgroups and discussion forums, such as Yahoo groups (Bury, 2016).

Online literary fandom began with one-way channels such as mailing lists, noticeboards, and book blogs. Fan clubs were formed, so any user could join and receive communications. Alternatively, through book blogs, readers could get informed, give feedback, and set up their own fan pages to talk about their experiences with the works they read (Robbins, 2017). Soon, pages appeared that brought the community together in a closer way: discussion forums, where users could discuss their favourite books and authors and collaboratively create content for fans (Baym, 2000).

In addition, there appeared what are known as fan fiction archives, like fanfiction.net, which thrive on community and with the Internet did not stop growing. Pages were created where fans could post content for others to read and comment on; this was how some fans became writers (Lammers & Marsh, 2015).

Subsequently, more sites appeared, and eventually the web evolved, improving its algorithms and developing further that sense of community. Around this period, books such as the *Harry Potter* series and the *Lord of the Rings* novels became famous.

### 3.2.2 *The YA/NA fandom and social media*

There are several distinctions in Web 2.0: more interactivity between users, collaboration, participation, and sharing. As the years went by, more sites, and later applications, appeared on the web that followed these values.

A significant site is LiveJournal, born in 1999, where users could create journals to express their thoughts and join group journals, called communities, where they could create content together. This site was the start of many fan fictions, especially slash fictions, which feature romantic relationships between two characters of the same gender. It was also the source of fan art, graphics, and several videos (Coppa, 2006). However, there was a migration to MySpace with its introduction in 2003, as it allowed content to be uploaded and shared with the friends list for comments and feedback.

Thereafter, more community-building applications started to appear, which has given rise to so-called “reading formations” (Bennett, 1983), where communities are brought together by like-minded tastes and environmental affiliation (Zappavigna, 2014). These apps were based on their user-generated content, which often consisted of users' everyday experiences.

In the early 2000s, the following social networks started to appear: Facebook (2004), YouTube (2005), Twitter (2006) and Tumblr (2007). They had a clear objective: to link people with something in common, regardless of the type of relationship that united them (Bury et al., 2013). All of them had an algorithm that recommended content and profiles based on user interactivity. While Facebook was used more on a personal level, the other three had a different potential function (Stoycheff et al., 2017).

The other three apps were widely used in fandoms. Twitter and Tumblr are based on textual and photographic content, while YouTube was one of the first to be video-based. Twitter and Tumblr sought to get fans together and create all kinds of content (Hutchins & Tindall, 2016). Both had a lot of fan fictions: Tumblr hosted links that took you to other platforms such as Wattpad or Archive of Our Own; while on Twitter, many were written directly on the app (Rouse, 2020).

Even though they all share similar content, each has its own audience: on Twitter there are people who talk about their favourite books, rate them and even initiate discussion topics, but are not avid fans (Šesek & Pušnik, 2014). It is also a platform for announcing news, so it is used by publishers. Still, most of the users of Book Twitter (commonly known as BookTwt) are people who are part of the publishing industry and not fans (Davies, 2023).

Through 2010-2014, Tumblr served as the epicentre of fandom. It brought together all kinds of fans, who met to share content and talk about their common interests (Hillman et al., 2014). A huge amount of content was produced and published: memes, fan video edits, fan art, fan fictions, recommendations, fan mixtapes, etc. It was a very active community, with 166.4 million users and 73.4 billion posts in January 2014 (Chang et al., 2014). However, it went into decline with the emergence of other networks such as Instagram and TikTok (Burton, 2017).

In this era, and more specifically on Tumblr, the participatory culture that Jenkins (2017) describes thrives. Fans contribute by creating content and exchanging it by reinterpreting favourite themes and characters. In doing so, a strong sense of community is created.

In terms of YouTube, it had a tremendous impact on the book fandom. It was the early days of the BookTubers (Book + YouTubers), which were essentially YouTubers who talked about books. These personalities gained a lot of popularity, with some of them accumulating more than a million followers, such as Jack Edwards (1.36M). The posts were wide-ranging, notably reviews and hauls, which consisted of showing off book purchases (Jiménez, 2019). In addition, many of them became famous for their ability to explain complex literary worlds, such as *Lord of the Rings* or more recently *Dune*. BookTubers were considered to be field specialists, so they had the expertise to recommend all kinds of books based on their own tastes or even on publishers' submissions (Perkins, 2017).

The expression BookTube first appeared in a video by Elizabeth Vallish in 2011, in her review of John Green's *Looking for Alaska*. The concept was then formalised into use in academic settings. Its roots go back to early 2007, when Leviossa started a channel to talk about Harry Potter and its fandom. However, it was not until 2011-2012 that the popularity of BookTubers skyrocketed (Tomasena, 2020).

These platforms began to be populated by certain users, called influencers, with a large following (Hughes, 2017). Among the members there was the possibility to collaborate, suggesting books and setting new trends, such as the typical challenges or TheBookTag (Ortega et al., 2021). This era was defined by book sagas such as *Twilight*, *50 Shades of Grey*, books by John Green, *The Hunger Games*, *Divergent*, *The Maze Runner*, and *Percy Jackson*.

### 3.2.3 The platformisation of the YA/NA fandom

Platformisation has reshaped the way readers interact, as it is necessary to be part of these platforms to belong in the community, to be aware of the latest updates and to create relevant content (Parnell, 2023). Moreover, several reader-specific applications have emerged, such as Goodreads (2006) or Storygraph (2019), where readers can bookmark and review their reading, and receive personalised recommendations.

Instagram emerged in 2010 as a fledgling social network, as it focused on posting photos and videos to share everyday moments with other users (Hu et al., 2014). It did not take long for the term Bookstagram to appear, denoting the sub-community focused on books. The hashtag #Bookstagram now has more than 104 million posts (as of 14 May 2024).

As is common in fan communities, many of the users are cross-platform, posting the same content (Lee et al., 2020). Many authors discuss the importance of this fandom migration, such as Fiesler & Dym (2020) or Zheng (2019), analysing the reasons why this happens, like the policy and value-based problems, when the platform does not follow the same ethics as the users, or is no longer accessible to them. However, this usually happens when a new more attractive platform appears, often following friends and communities that have done the same. This is why many of the BookTubers who already had a large following on YouTube gradually drifted to other networks, such as Instagram (Reddan et al., 2024).

Hammoudi (2018) calls the number of users joining this literary trend the Bookstagram effect. What is surprising is that many of these accounts are run by teenagers, sr4ecommending books their age, i.e. YA or NA.

One common practice is the posting of aesthetic images, similar to a classic still life, in which the books are accompanied by elements that match the overall style of the book (Thomas, 2021). It is usually accompanied by a review or a synopsis. Some authors classify this as embodied re-enactment, which illustrates the physical action of reading, enhancing comprehension and communication of the experience (Tolins & Samermit, 2016).

In online fan communities, Big Name Fans (BNF) exploit their fame and even charge for their participation and reach in the fandom. This occurred when *Fifty Shades of Grey*, based on *Twilight* fan fiction, was published, which prompted numerous BNFs to promote their work with the intention of replicating the success (Gudiksen, 2017). There are several examples of BNFs such as Faroukh Naseem (@Theguywiththebook), or, within Spain, Iryna Zubkova (@ir\_zu).

This era reflects the concept of the attention economy coined by Herbert A. Simon (1971, cited in Marwick, 2015), where there are so many users on Bookstagram competing for attention. In the case of fan communities, many earn money by starting their own small business monetising their content, known as the fan economy (Vlachaki, 2023).

In the beginning, fandom was always considered a gift economy, because they did not have an economic gain in mind (Scott, 2009). Recently, however, the possibility of selling unofficial merchandising based on cultural works has emerged. They are often sold through particular websites or Etsy. In the literary fan scene, fan art, bookmarks, textile goods, etc. are regularly produced and sold (Aswathi, 2022).

In 2016 TikTok appeared, an application based on short videos that strongly supports virality. But, it wasn't until 2020, with the pandemic, that it became extremely famous. It was then that BookTok, the book version of the platform, exploded. Over 33 million posts have been posted under the BookTok hashtag (as of May 27th), with top profiles such as Ayman Chaudhary (@aymansbooks) earning £1,198.36 per video, making her one of TikTok's highest earners on BookTok (Mensah, 2023).

The BookTok boom has helped many young people who had given up on reading to take it up again, since TikTok users reportedly are reading 50% more because of their exposure to the app (Book Riot, 2023). Works adapted within this context are sagas such as *The Selection* by Kiera Cass, *Red Queen* by Victoria Aveyard, and authors including Ali Hazelwood, Sarah J. Maas, and Taylor Jenkins Reid.

Booktokers create all type of content: from videos that make them increase their views to trends or humour. Likewise, the books that are most promoted are those that involve romance, fantasy, or tears (Flood, 2021). Whilst some videos have been recycled from other social networks such as the unboxing or the participation in literary challenges, some emerging themes have originated in the app.

BookTok's unique culture is extremely important, as it is so broad that it has created sub-communities based on shared preferences or genres. It allows users to interact with people who have similar tastes and receive recommendations (Flores, 2023). However, the BookTok community is creating a wealth of content that can be sourced from other platforms and even capitalising on it (Guehring, 2023).

BookTok's influence is so great that it has impacted the sale and promotion of some books, taking them from unknown to bestseller, as it did with Colleen Hoover's *It Ends With Us* (Khan, 2023). Evidently, its effect does not only affect its users but also extends to the publishing industry.

### 3.3 YA fandom and the publishing industry

The publishing industry has long realised the influence of the BookTok community when it comes to sales, particularly in the YA/NA community. Sales in 2020 reflected an increase of 24.7%, and those in 2021 of 27.5%. This means that, as of 2022, the genre will account for 4.58% of total book sales, with an estimated average increase of 3.5% per year and a value of \$13.02 billion over five years. This, reflected in sales figures, would represent 35.03 million copies in 2022 (Curcic, 2023).

In Scribd's Year Review 2021 study, there is data to show that their presence on BookTok leads to significant sales increases, explaining: "Most notably, after an -18% decline in readership prior to any BookTok attention, books featured on TikTok saw an average spike of 75% after promotion on that platform" (Fatmi, 2021).

Publishers have seen the potential of this middleman in between the general public and books: the booktokers, who can recommend a book and make it a hit. As a result, marketing and communication managers already have part of their budget set aside for them. This had previously occurred with BookTubers, who due to their social capital, i.e. their contacts and relationships (Bourdieu, 1996), became prescribers for the promotion of a book, particularly among younger audiences. This has been replicated on TikTok, with partnerships taking place (Tomasena, 2021, pp. 301-302). Furthermore, there has been cases where booktokers have turned into published authors, like Tamara Molina with her book *Donde no puedes encontrarme* (2024).

Moreover, there are small companies that have taken advantage of all the aesthetical aspects of BookTok and have discovered a profit in redesigning their books in a more pleasing way. Examples would be Fairyloot or Illumicrate. These made a big splash on BookTok, so now larger companies are following suit (Beestone, 2021). Latest releases are now coming in limited editions with sprayed edges or the author's signature, either in digital form. In Spain, with the publication of *Iron Flame* (2023, 2024 in Spain), units were being sold for more than double the price on second-hand apps and young people queued up trying to get one of the limited copies (Bertran, 2024).

The impact of BookTok has been so great that it has now become a genre. Nowadays, it is not difficult to see a BookTok section in bookstores, with the app's hits. Also, the vast majority of bookstores, libraries, and publishers have their own TikTok account, where they follow online trends and use viral sounds to have views. Nonetheless, this has caused some problems in the publishing industry. Since anybody can use TikTok, even young children, there is a lot of confusion with regard to the themes of the books. There are books with explicit sex scenes or dark romance that are being targeted at YA. An issue that many are strongly opposed to (Whitehall, 2024), that is why booktokers are starting to label the books.

Ultimately, BookTok and its BookTokers have become a crucial tool in the promotion and success of a book. They are also starting to become part of the industry, with some becoming translators, publishers, contributors or even authors. However, it is not yet known how far BookTok will reach as its influence cannot last forever, perhaps it will migrate to another platform or burst the same as the real estate bubble.

#### 4. Literature review

There have been quite a few studies on BookTok, especially some drawing on its BookTube antecedents. Many of them analyse the influence the platform has on determining the selection of one book over another. In other words, how BookTok affects the overall success of a book. Nevertheless, there are almost no studies that specifically analyse the fan content of such a community.

Meanwhile, focusing on the fandom aspect there are a great number of studies, many of them centred on the analysis of dynamics or an overall exploration of the fandom. There are even some studies about fan content ranging from fan fictions, fan arts, fan conventions, and so on. In the literary world, though, these activities have not yet been thoroughly researched. Hence, a comprehensive review of BookTok's fan community and published content could be very much needed.

The nearest comparable research to the one presented in this study is that of Tomasena (2020), where he joined the realm of BookTube as a way to gain an understanding of how it works. In his dissertation, he discusses the sort of content that is published by BookTubers and their relationship with the editorial industry. But it's clear that BookTube while there are many parallels with BookTok, they are not entirely the same in nature.

Additionally, other studies, such as Jerasa & Boffone (2021), rely on BookTok as a basis for exploring the different cultural practices that are prevalent in this space. Likewise, there are other authors like Polli (2023) who have examined the platform but focusing particularly on book reviews, including Colleen Hoover's *It Ends With Us* and Taylor Jenkins Reid's *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*.

Marchese (2018) performed a review of the overall fan culture of the YA genre, and in particular focused on how fans have influenced the publishing industry. She drew on some best-known licences in the genre *Harry Potter* and *Twilight*, discussing how these series have been the foundation of the boom in the field. She makes no major reference to social media, but does hint at its importance.

In this way, it is true that there are basic studies to be able to investigate the subject. But because the BookTok phenomenon is quite recent and fairly unique, not many studies have been carried out. And it remains, to this day, a field with very few research studies. Therefore, further in-depth investigations will be innovative yet reliant on a solid precedent.

## 5. Methodology

As outlined earlier (see point 2), the research will follow a qualitative approach, involving the combination of two different methodologies: textual analysis and digital (auto)ethnography. Each methodology will have its own particular method of data collection and analysis. In the case of textual analysis, the data collection will be conducted manually by retrieving content from social media, and such data which will be analysed through semiotics. Participant observation and semi-structured interviews will be the data collection methods for digital (auto)ethnography, while thematic analysis is the chosen method for data analysis.

Textual analysis involves the study of content in all types of formats, whether audio, video, or pictures (Smith, 2017). Specifically, multimodal semiotic analysis will aim to identify the meanings, values, and messages that are being used in *The Hunger Games* and ACOTAR BookTok community (Rogers & Kress, 2011).

Digital (auto)ethnography will entail the blending of cultural and personal experiences (Dunn & Myers, 2020), experiencing the BookTok community and the publishing sector at first hand. The relationship between users and their social media will be taken into account, with regard to the publishing houses' TikTok accounts and the followers themselves. After all, before conducting an ethnographic study, people's relationships with technology should be considered (Pink et al., 2015).

As for the fieldwork, both methodologies will be in relation to the cases of *The Hunger Games* and the ACOTAR series, either any content published on TikTok or their own fans. My experience in the juvenile publishing field enables me to know how publishers operate and the processes they undergo when publishing a YA/NA book.

In the same way, it allows me to have access to them and to be able to contact experts in the field. Furthermore, I find myself a very active person in *The Hunger Games* and ACOTAR BookTok communities by following various BNFs and participating in fan activities.

In the following, a detailed explanation will be given about the different techniques and methods that will be applied in the course of this work.

## 5.1 Data collection

### *5.1.1 Retrieval of content from social media*

The first part of the study will be focused on content from different social media, mainly from TikTok. Initially, different types of videos from the BookTok community for *The Hunger Games* and ACOTAR will be screened, whether they are from more well-known profiles such as BNFs or various users. The selection criteria will be through its theme, visualisations, and engagement, and it will be done manually.

The data collection will consist of 400 TikTok videos featuring the BookTok hashtag. It will also be seen, however, if the content directs the user to another site, for example, a video that talks about a playlist specifically created for a book. As such, that video will prompt the user to switch to Spotify to enjoy the fan created content. In addition, different fan works will be chosen: fan arts, fan edits, fanfics, fan events, and so on. The content can be in video, audio or textual form, but must always be sourced from BookTok.

### *5.1.2 Participant observation*

Afterwards, participant observation will be carried out, both digitally and in person. On the one hand, immersing myself in the BookTok communities of *The Hunger Games* and ACOTAR, observing how the different users interact with each other, their practices, and the content that is published. On the other hand, participating in the process of creating a marketing and communication plan in a publishing house specialising in YA/NA books. The aim is to see how it operates and if there is any kind of partnership with the BookTok community. Throughout the course of the participant observation, all highlights will be recorded and documented. A logbook of what has been sighted will be compiled.

Participant observation is generally used in the context of ethnographic studies, where the main concern is to be immersed in a particular space in order to understand it to its fullest extent (Bernard & Gravlee, 2014). Therefore, a global vision of the digital universe of BookTok and of the editorial on-site world will be obtained.

### *5.1.3 Semi-structured interviews*

The third part will consist of 30 interviews approximately distributed as follows: 20 of them will be with BookTok users, some of them with a large community of followers, and others more unknown but nonetheless participants of the community. The other 10 will be carried out with professionals from the marketing and communication departments of different publishing houses, in order to get that behind the scenes view that only they can provide.

The questions will centre on BookTok, its dynamics and practices, drawing on the perspectives of both the community users and the publishers' decisions when releasing a book. Therefore, they seek to understand the point of view from which both parties experience the release of the books. It will also focus on analysing the relationship between publishers and content creators, exploring how fan content can become a form of editorial work.

The interviews will be based on a loosely scripted interview guide in order to achieve a smooth and non-pressured conversation. Moreover, semi-structured interviews allow discovering about a topic in an organized way while also giving the space to intervene alternatively on comments that come out through the answers of the interviewees (Magaldi & Berler, 2020).

## 5.2 Data analysis

### *5.2.1. Multimodal Semiotic analysis*

The content collected in the retrieval from BookTok based on *The Hunger Games* and ACOTAR will be screened according to a multimodal semiotic analysis, relying on codes and signs (Rogers & Kress, 2011). Both the connotative and denotative aspects of each of the videos, audios, or texts will be explored. Interpretation will be made of what is said, what is seen, what is heard and what it signifies, identifying patterns. Moreover, given the fact that different formats of content will be analysed, audio, text, visual, and so forth, the analysis will be adjusted to each of them, treating them as coherently as necessary.

This method will aim to achieve a consensual understanding of what will be analysed. It will make it possible to go further and analyse the complexity of each piece of information, and not only on the basis of the simplest (Kim, 2015). Moreover, it will address the interactive meaning, i.e. the relationship between the viewer and the content.

This semiotic analysis seeks to provide answers to the first four research questions: R.Q.1.1, R.Q.1.2, R.Q.2.1 and R.Q.2.2.

### *5.2.2 Thematic analysis*

A thematic analysis will be used to analyse the data derived from the digital (auto)ethnography: the fieldnotes of the participant observations and the transcripts of the interviews. Therefore, patterns will be gradually drawn out according to the different themes that emerge (Clarke & Braun, 2016). The analysis will also be carried out inductively, i.e. without preconceptions or a previously established coding system (Proudfoot, 2022). During the analysis, codes will be presented and, later on, themes with which the data will be summarised according to patterns.

NVivo software will be used to assist in this analysis, as segmentation allows for better observation and channelling of details (Willig & Rogers, 2017). This analysis aims to provide an overview of the functioning of BookTok's digital community and its YA publishing house, getting a closer and more direct view. It will concentrate on the dynamics and practices that are common amongst the community participants, as well as examine their incentives. Also, it will look at the interactions between the professional author, the publishers, and the fans.

The thematic analysis is intended to tackle the final four research questions: R.Q.3.1, R.Q.3.2, R.Q.4.1 and R.Q.4.2.

**Table 1****Research plan overview**

Main objectives	Specific objectives	Methodology	Data collection	Analysis
To analyse fan content within the BookTok community, focusing on works such as The Hunger Games and ACOTAR.	Categorise fan content within the BookTok community, focusing on works such as The Hunger Games and ACOTAR	Textual analysis	Retrieval of content	Semiotic analysis
	Identify patterns in tropes and values present in The Hunger Games and ACOTAR fan content on BookTok.			
To observe the collaborative creation processes, community interactions and practices of the BookTok community, reviewing its effect on the publishing industry.	Examine collaborative creation processes among BookTok users within The Hunger Games and ACOTAR fandoms to understand their impact on community dynamics.	Digital (auto)ethnography	Participant observation and semi-structured interviews	Thematic analysis
	Explore the fan content creation within BookTok on publishing trends and preferences, with a focus on works such as The Hunger Games and ACOTAR, to understand how fan-generated content influences decision-making processes in the publishing industry.			

**5.3. Research ethics**

Qualitative research such as the one presented here is a complex matter, so several ethical factors must be taken into account. Therefore, a set of ground rules based on respect, objectivity, and honest mutual sharing should be established, as well as having different responses prepared for different stimuli and reactions (Dooly et al., 2017).

Firstly, since minors would be involved in this research, as both the target audience of YA/NA books and the BookTok community are full of minors, their privacy, and identity should be respected and protected. Informed consents will be required for minor fans, their parents/guardians, fans of legal age, publishers' staff, etc. Moreover, when being handled, each participant will receive a pseudonym to ensure their safety.

Furthermore, since public TikTok data will be handled, this will be done under the platform's guidelines. The information will be completely anonymous, neither faces nor identifiers will be shown in order to avoid any harm, they'll be blurred out to protect their privacy. In addition, an ethical review of the research will be requested from the Research Ethics Committee of the Pompeu Fabra University.

## 6. Timeline

Listed below is a timetable, potentially subject to revision, for the implementation of the project in the framework of a doctoral thesis over a four-year period.

	JA	FB	MR	AP	MY	JN	JL	AG	ST	OC	NV	DC
<b>First Year</b>												
Literature review												
Theoretical framework building												
Research design and methods expansion												
Ethical protocols preparation												
Retrival of content												
Accordance of basis of semiotic analysis												
Semiotic analysis												
<b>Second Year</b>												
Literature review												
Preparation of participant observation (BookTok communities)												
Participant observation (BookTok communities)												
Semi-instructured interviews (BookTok communities)												
Preparation of semi-instructured interviews (BookTok communities)												
Transcription of BookTok communities data												
Processing of BookTok communities data												
<b>Third Year</b>												
Literature review												
Preparation of participating observation (publishing houses)												
Participating observation (publishing houses)												
Participant observation (BookTok communities)												
Semi-instructured interviewees search												
Preparation of semi-instructured interviews (publishing houses)												
Semi-instructured interviews (publishing houses)												
Transcription of publishing houses data												
<b>Fourth Year</b>												
Participant observation and interviews analysis (publishing houses)												
Literature review												
Report and thesis writing												
Submission and defense												

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