

e-books and audiobooks in Canada, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Spain & English Imports

the digital consumer book barometer

A report on e-book and audiobook sales in Canada, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands & Spain and digital imports

2019

www.global-ebook.com

Written by Rüdiger Wischenbart and Michaela Anna Fleischhacker

with sales data provided by Bookwire, CB, DeMarque edigita, Ingram, Libranda and Readbox

Sponsors









Contributing Partners









Design Artwork by Rosa Egg

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ICON LEGEND







E-Book



Title Life Cycle



Germany



Audiobook



Imports



Italy



Volume Units



Value / Revenue



The Netherlands



Price



Median Price



Spain



Top 10



Top 25



Country Comparison

Introduction

About the Digital Consumer Book Barometer 2019 The scope, approach and ambitions of this report on e-books and audiobooks Our partners and sponsors

Digital books are different.

With e-books around for a good decade, as a mainstream offer to readers, and now with audiobooks even more swiftly adding digital options to lovers of good stories and other bookish content, we decided to both broaden and deepen our observations.

The Barometer, started in 2018 as a data driven observatory for digital books in several European countries, has now been transformed into the Digital Consumer Book Barometer.

We firmly believe that digital books are about to evolve beyond formats.

Authors, publishers, distributors and readers expect books to be available in various formats, physical and digital, in different offerings, for purchase or in a subscription, accessible through an increasing variety of channels.

The ambition of the Barometer is to pro-

vide granular and relevant insights into how these digital markets function.

First of all, the Barometer brings together aggregated and structured sales data from distributors whose shared interest it is to offer their customers the best possible information about fast changing markets.

Four of these partners support the Barometer also as sponsors:

- Bookwire, a German digital distributor and full service provider with a presence in Germany, Spain and Latin America;
- DeMarque, a leader in digital content distribution, specifically digital books, based in Canada, and the owner of
- Libranda, a distributor of Spanish digital books for Spain and Latin America;
- The International Publishing Distribution Association, IPDA, in Madrid, and organizer of the Readmagine conferences.

Additional partners are:

- edigita, a leading e-book distributor in Italy;
- readbox, a German provider of book creation, distribution and marketing services;
- cb (formerly Centraal Boekhuis), a cooperative logistics provider specializing in media and healthcare in the Netherlands;
- Ingram Content Group, a leading global wholesaler and service provider to the book industry in the USA and worldwide.

The Digital Consumer Book barometer, a twin report with the **Global eBook** series, is researched and produced by Rüdiger Wischenbart Content and Consulting, in close cooperation with its sponsors and partners.

The Barometer can be downloaded from the sponsors and at www.global-ebook.com

E-Books are read on the beach and on long winter nights. Digital reading seasons are more continuous than those in print.

Consumers make e-books peak twice every year: By buying summer reading in July, and then again increasing purchases for the end-of-the-year holidays.

The Barometer 2019 rolls out trends in five different markets for three consecutive years, 2016, 2017 and 2018:

- Canada
- Germany (including also Austria and German-speaking Switzerland, or ,DACH')
- Italy
- The Netherlands
- Spain (the latter including export sales, mostly into Latin America), and
- Foreign (mostly English) language imports.

Summer peaks are striking in all countries, but are more prominent in the Netherlands than in Germany.

Overall, in most markets sales are spread out more evenly along the seasons, with

a slight slump in January and February. In the Netherlands though, summer peaks are higher than elsewhere.

A comparison between different countries reveals not just similarities, but unique patterns as well.

In general, the trending curves between distributed units (or volume) and the generated revenue (or value) are remarkably in synch.

In Germany though, holiday peaks indicate a consumers' willingness to spend on more expensive e-books. This is not the case in any other market.

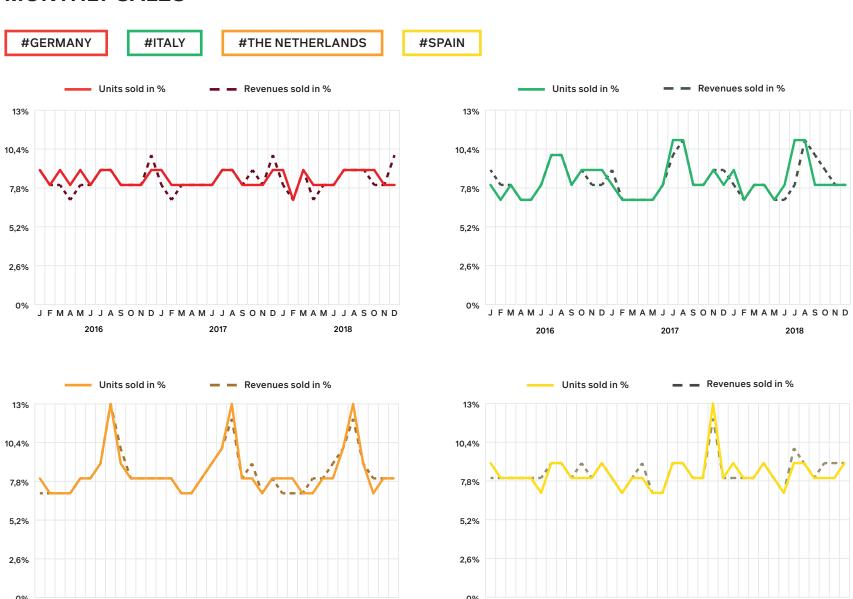
Looking at data curves over three years reflects a clear pattern of a well established routine for when and how consumers do their digital purchases.

In Canada, in 2016, the e-book calendar was still much of a roller-coaster. But from 2017 onwards, a more steady rhythm evolved, yet one contrasting the strong summer sales in Europe with an estival slump.

These curves provide a solid framework of fundamentals for any planning with regard to title launches and marketing strategies.



MONTHLY SALES



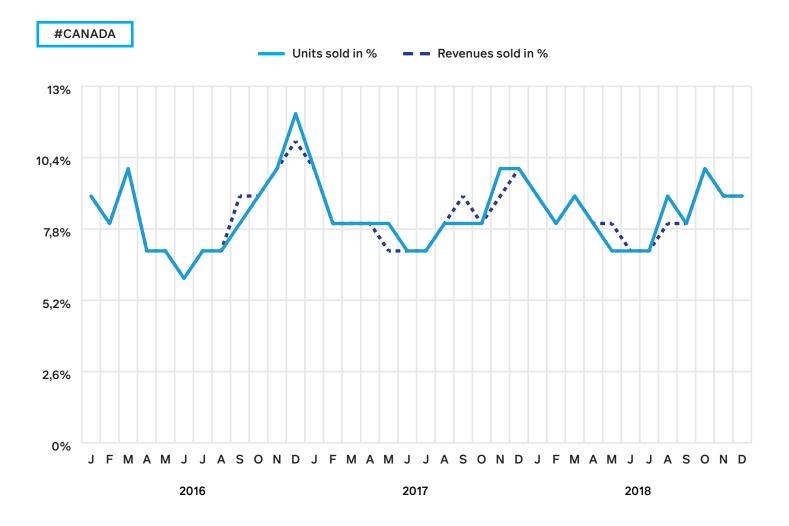








MONTHLY SALES CANADA











Setting the right price for the right catalog and the right target audience

Consumers have very diverse price sensitivities and buying preferences. The surveyed markets show huge differences in consumers' preferred price points for e-books. The right pricing is a crucial decision for success.

Many publishers have a clear preference to price e-books at only a limited discount to the print edition. By contrast, independently published digital books, often serial genre fiction, favor massive unit sales at much lower price points.

So digital consumer book markets often are radically segmented. At least three different realms can be identified, each reflecting a different sales strategy.

- A low price segment with e-books for less than 5, or even less than 3€ or \$, for self-published genre fiction, or for price marketing campaigns to help promote series.
- A middle price segment between 7 or 8 and 10€ or \$, with e-books offered at a similar price as a trade paperback.
- A high price sector, close to hardcover print.

Looking in detail at unit sales (volume), rather than generated revenue (value) provides a sharper picture of these segments.

Canada sees very dynamic growth in the lowest price segment of under 1\$, and an exceptionally broad sphere of mid-priced sales, in a wide range between 9 and 18\$.

In Germany, a vast majority of e-books is sold at prices below 10€, yet with a decline in the low category of under 3€. Interestingly, e-books offered at either 9.99€ or at 12€ to 12.99€ are expanding, indicating at publishers finding an increasingly stable preferred pricing zone.

Italy has a couple of predominating sweet spots, one at right under 3€, the other at around 9.99, probably aiming at two distinct reading audiences, one for self-published genre fiction, the other for quality fiction from traditional publishers.

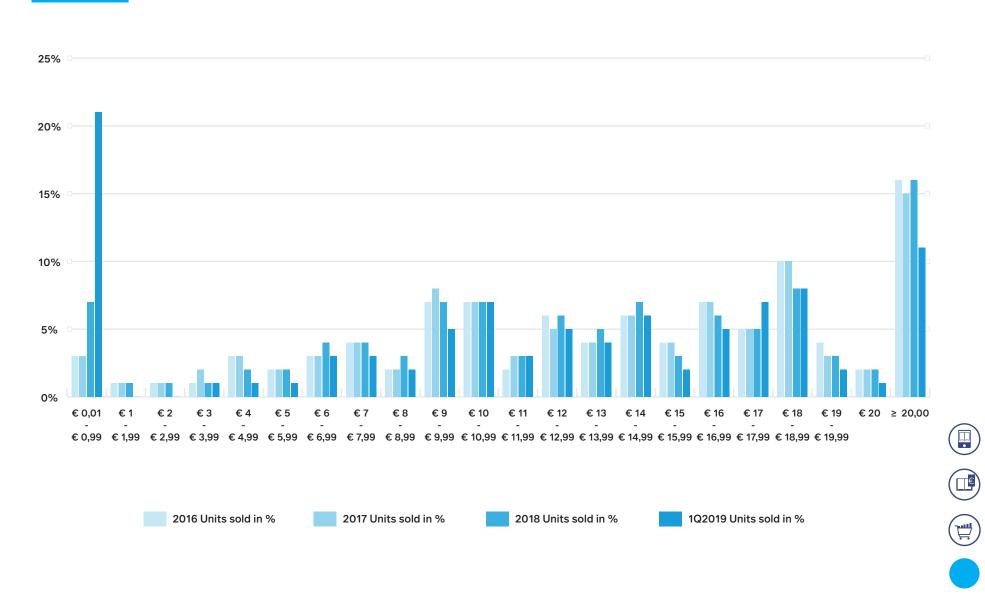
In The Netherlands, a vast majority of digital books are sold at three price levels, just und $4 \in$, under $6 \in$ and - recently with a strong increase - under $9 \in$.

Similar to Italy, e-book unit sales hit a ceiling at around 10€ in Spain, too. But only in Spain, the lowest segment of e-books under 3€ as dramatically surged in the past year or so.

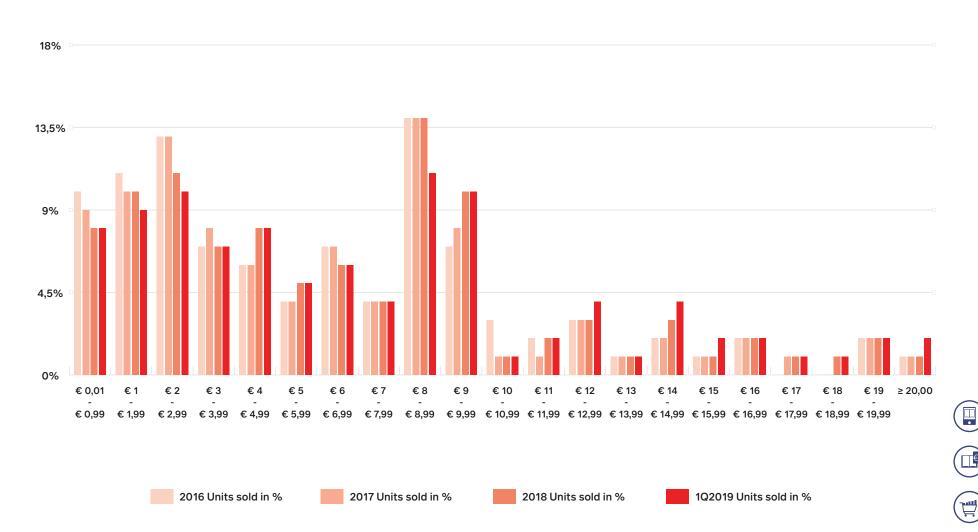
Overall, e-book markets seem to shift. From the early days of publishers keeping e-book prices up close to print levels. This was followed by the emergence of two distinct zones, one for self-published and serial genre fiction, and a separate area, around 10€ or even more, for digital editions of publishers' titles.

Now, in a third move, in each surveyed market, several more or less stable price sectors have formed, each catering to a respectively singular target audience. The challenge will be to directly address one's specific group.

#CANADA

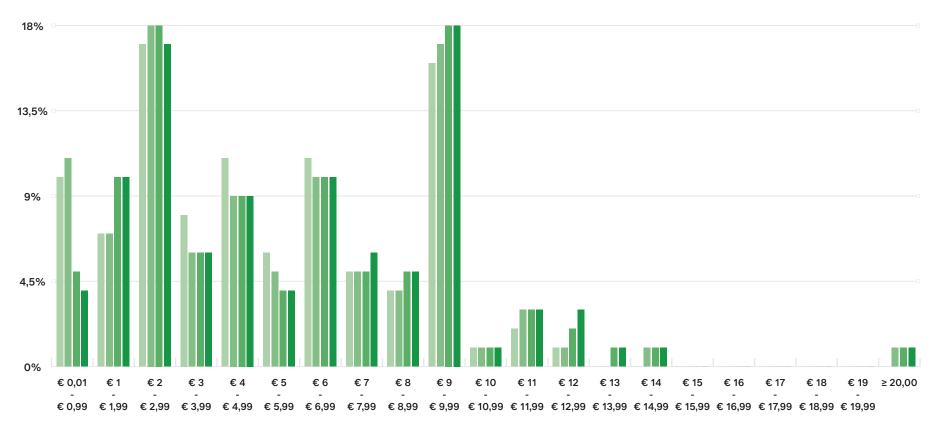


#GERMANY



2016 Units sold in %

#ITALY



2018 Units sold in %

1Q2019 Units sold in %

2017 Units sold in %





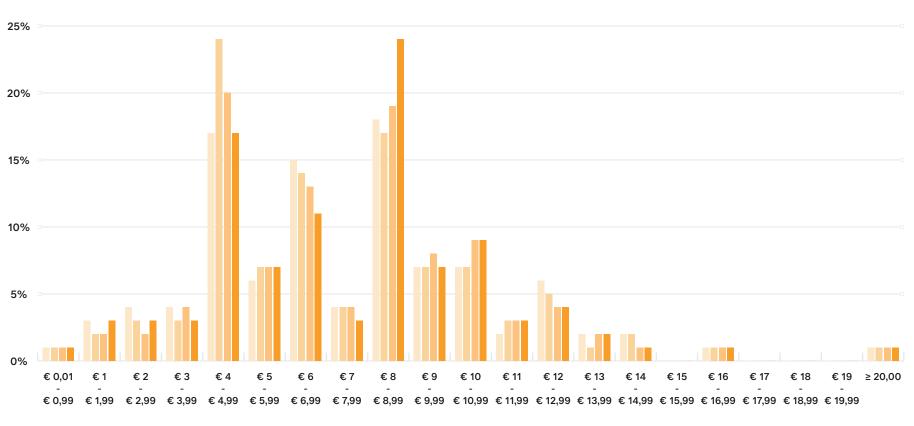






2016 Units sold in %

#THE NETHERLANDS



2017 Units sold in %

2018 Units sold in %

1Q2019 Units sold in %

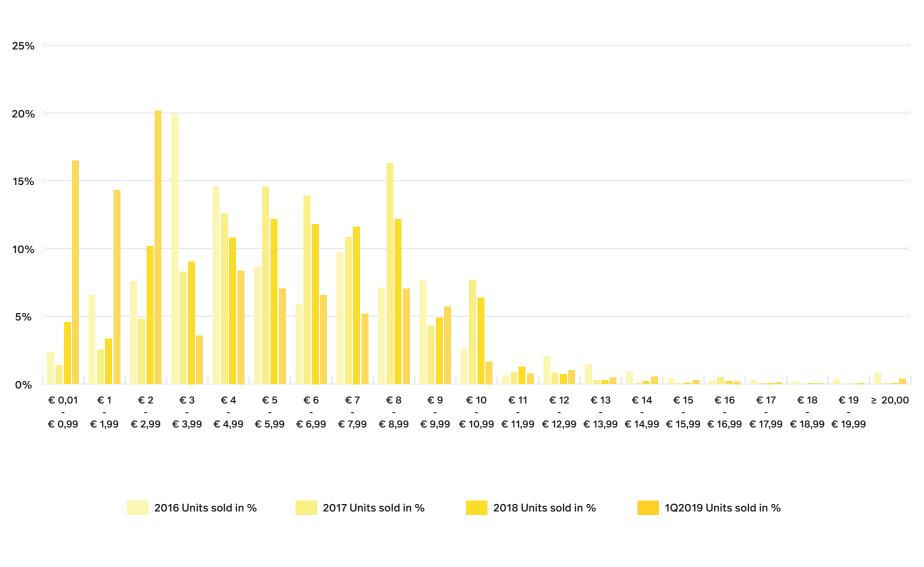








#SPAIN



Balancing generated revenue (value) with units sold (volume): Country comparisons

High unit sales at a low price can be profitable, as well as low volume sales at higher prices. However, a well balanced overall strategy and the finetuning must be right.

How much are consumers prepared to A direct comparison between generated pay for downloading a good read? A direct comparison between generated revenue and units sold, by price and

Preferences differ significantly between countries, and of course also between genres.

Ebooks have in fact established new segments that are defined by price. Traditional publishers aim at keeping digital pricing close to print. But genre fiction bets on volume and serial writing, at the lowest conceivable price point.

Furthermore, even in strictly price regulated markets like Germany, price marketing has gained in relevance. In crime series, for instance, it has become a common practice to promote a new title by drastically lowering the price of an earlier title of the same series.

A direct comparison between generated revenue and units sold, by price and across several countries allows for powerful analysis - and subsequent optimization of pricing strategies.

First, we see structural differences between low-price countries, like Italy or Spain, and much less price-sensitive markets like Canada.

Second, we realize that even in markets with overall upscale pricing, like Germany, relevant earnings kick in at low levels like \$2.99.

Everywhere though, 8 to 10€ or \$ seem to form a sweet spot for the average digital reader.

But also between \$11 and \$12.99, some good business is made in Canada, Germany, Italy and The Netherlands. Just not in Spain.







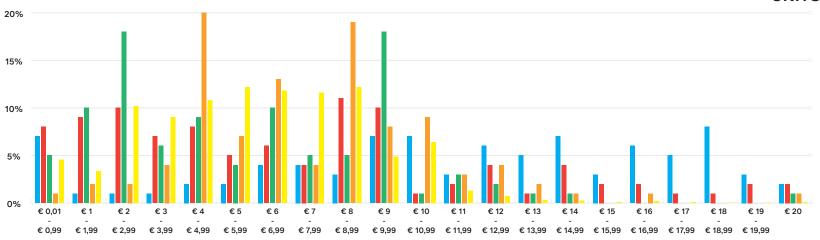


COUNTRY COMPARISON

#CANADA #GERMANY #ITALY #THE NETHERLANDS #SPAIN

REVENUES '18 30% 25% 20% 15% 10% 5% 0% €2 €3 €5 €8 €9 € 17 € 19 € 0,01 €1 €6 €7 € 10 € 16 € 18 € 0,99 € 1,99 € 2,99 € 3,99 € 4,99 € 5,99 € 6,99 € 7,99 € 8,99 € 9,99 € 10,99 € 11,99 € 12,99 € 13,99 € 14,99 € 15,99 € 16,99 € 17,99 € 18,99 € 19,99

UNITS SOLD '18













E-Books markets are strongly segmented by genre: Country comparisons (part 2)

Segmenting e-books correctly (and digital books in general); Assessing genre categories realistically and in perspective; Limitations of our current data sets, and some valid lessons to learn nevertheless.

E-book audiences are deeply segmented, with huge differences between genres, countries, but also types of publishing and distribution channels.

E-books - for good and for wrong reasons - are seen by many observers as a fundamentally limited format, specializing mostly in the not-so-well-recognized niches of the writing profession and reading target audiences.

Indeed, genres like Romance, Fantasy or Science Fiction (SciFi) are largely dominated by e-books.

Particularly Amazon has been extremely successful in making its Kindle Direct (KDP) program the hub for a by now global new phenomenon of writings doing it (almost) all by themselves, writing the

story, preparing the digital book, and marketing through Amazon by building a community of fans and followers.

After a good decade, we better should recognize that the new model has accomplished more. It established a new segment of publishing, which benefits not just the niche.

Particularly the biggest, globally active publishing corporations like Penguin Random House, Hachette or Harper Collins have learned to partner, and leverage, both ecosystems by now.

The full picture is not evenly represented though by our sets of digital sales data. We miss out on the KDP side.

This said, we nevertheless are able to visualize some of the underlying patterns.

By comparing unit sales across countries, sliced by genre category, highlights relevant specifics, by country, by genre and also by identifying some blanks.

In both Education and Children & Young Adult, e-books have have found very little traction so far.

But this may change soon, as we look at the quickly rising presence in digital audiobooks, as will be documented in the last chapter of this Barometer survey.

Looking across national market borders therefore can be used as an early trending indicator, that allows to well prepare for a next step in digital books.







GENRE BY UNITS

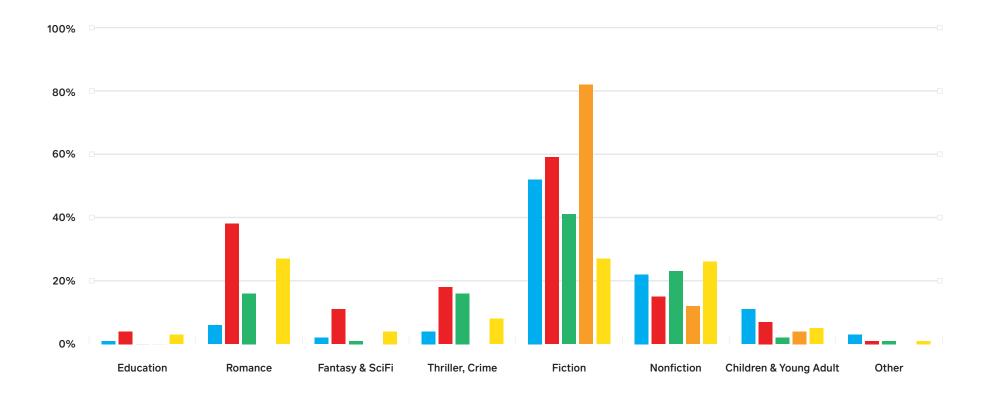
#CANADA

#GERMANY

#ITALY

#THE NETHERLANDS

#SPAIN









Drilling deeper: Genre splits and pricing What price points generate the highest revenue in which category

Comparing main e-book genres by genre category and price point between Canada, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain A radar understand market drivers and to accurately finetune pricing stragegies

E-book markets over time have become very specific. Unlike print, target audiences are both highly segmented, and volatile.

Consumers have become very sensitive to pricing in some genre categories even in strictly price regulated markets. But they feel much less constraint by price in their purchases in other categories.

E-books have taken some categories by assault, like romance, while remaining very much niche in others, like education.

Price sensitivity is very different in, say Canada or Italy.

But so far, no handy toolset has been made available to systematically explore such issues and distill practical takeaways for the positioning of catalog profiles, or for managing individual titles effectively.

The Barometer proposes such a toolset.

To avoid a too granular, too detailed, and all too sophisticated first glance at an admirably complex and layered field of observation, we chose just one angle for this report.

For each surveyed country, we show, and juxtapose, revenue generated for each main genre at different price points.

The underlying data are very granular, so that easily, different angles can be chosen alternatively, like

Comparing again directly revenue (value) and units (volume);

Pick out one or a couple of genres;

Do more targeted comparisons between markets;

Benchmark a small list of specific titles with the overall curve of its category performance.

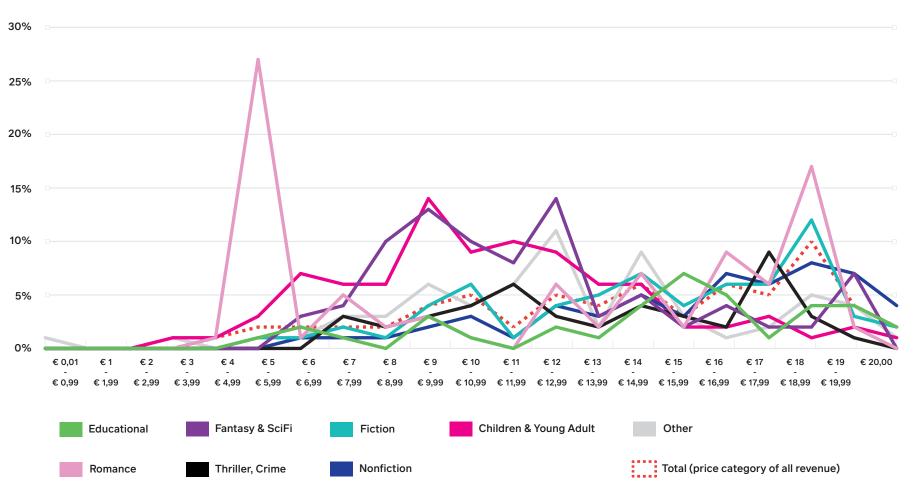
With the Barometer, we bet that such specific in depth information will be key in optimizing the performance of title offerings against an increasingly thorrough competition from the huge increase in overall putput of digital titles, across any format, as well as against the even fiercer battle for consumers' attention with other narrative media content.





CANADA: E-BOOKS GENRE BY PRICE, 2018

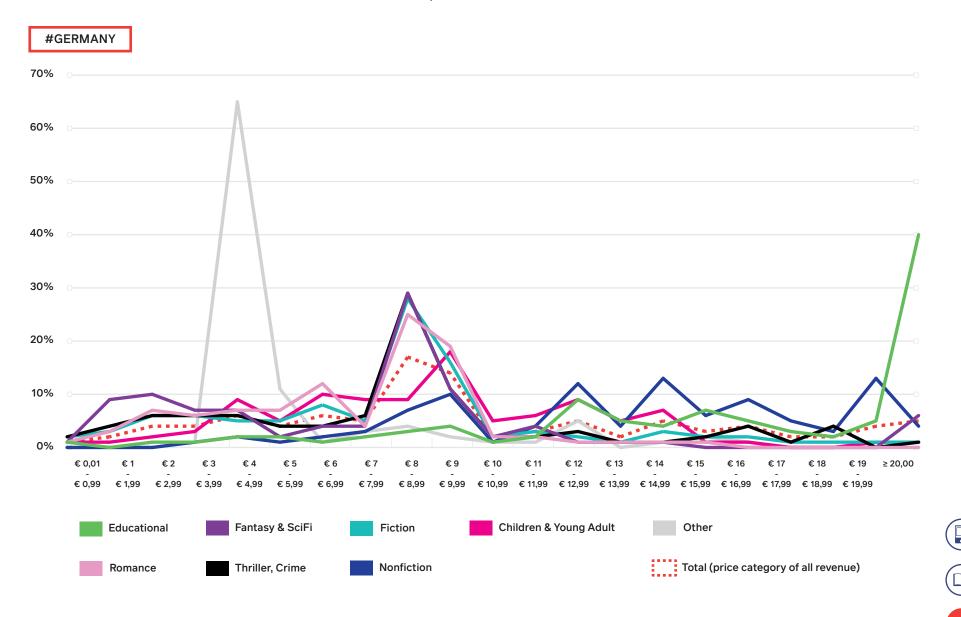
#CANADA





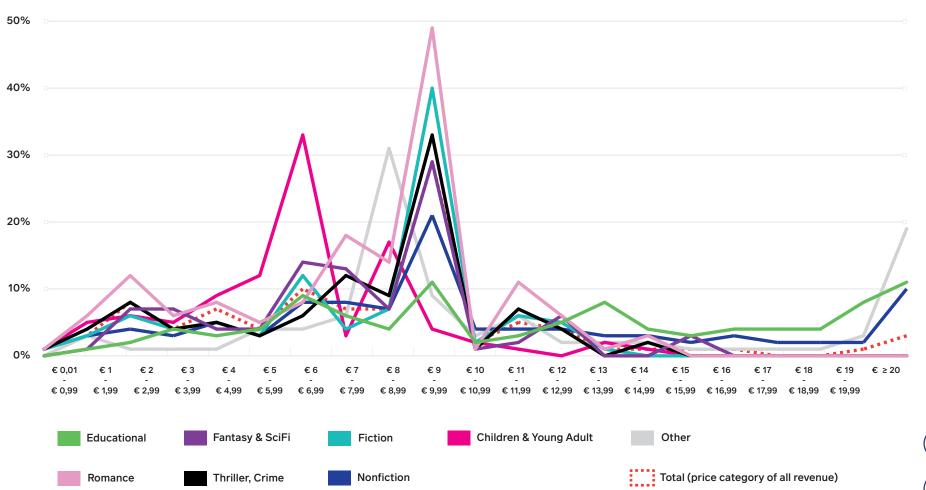


GERMANY: E-BOOKS GENRE BY PRICE, 2018



ITALY: E-BOOKS GENRE BY PRICE, 2018

#ITALY



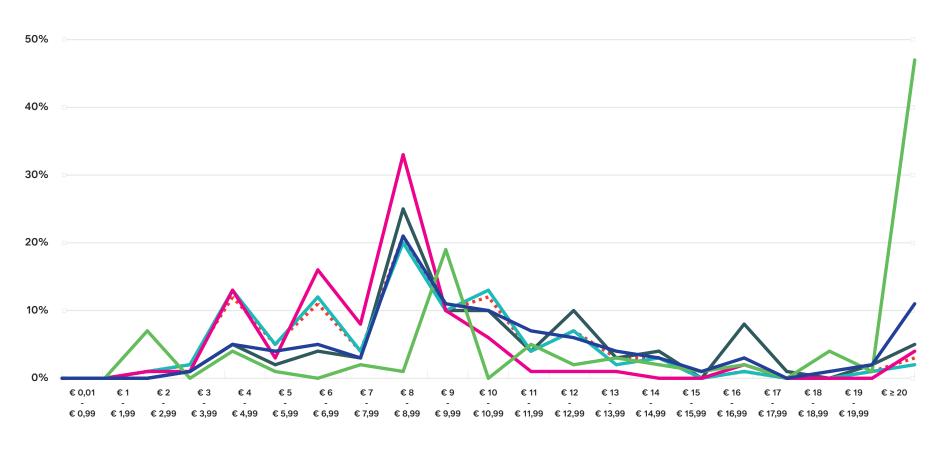






THE NETHERLANDS: E-BOOKS GENRE BY PRICE, 2018

#THE NETHERLANDS





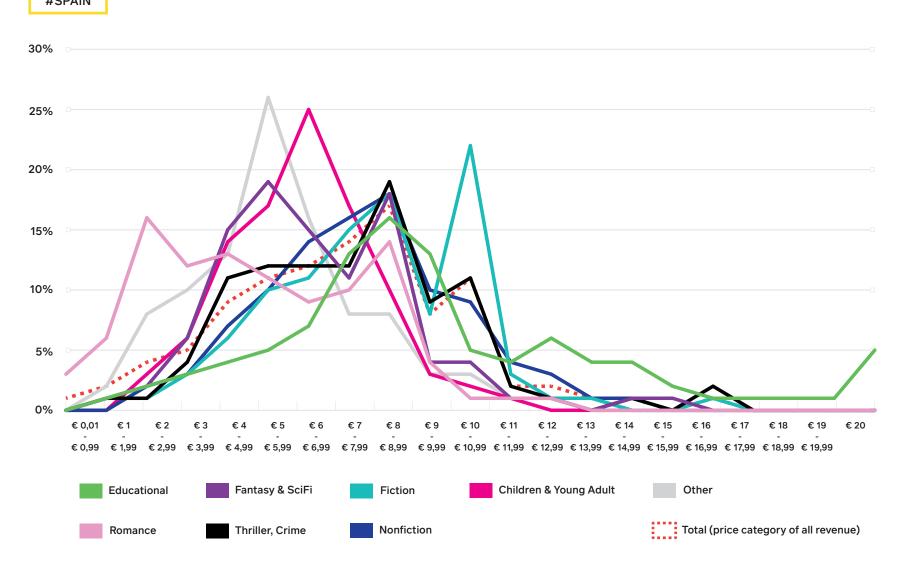






SPAIN: E-BOOKS GENRE BY PRICE, 2018











Life cycles of digital titles: Selling fast, or steadily

Recognizing, and understanding the specific potential of quick versus long sellers.

What to make of different characteristics in adjusting marketing approaches.

Looking at a distributor's top 25 selling e-book titles in their respective first year after publication reveals strikingly different dynamics that shape a market.

We drill down by revenue and units, in different markets, for different selections of titles.

For a start, we look at the top 25 titles of distributor Readbox in Germany, comparing the life cycle curves of each of the top 3 titles, with the average of all top 25.

T1 is the typical quick sell, skyrocketing immediately for three months. But soon afterwards, the title is burned out. T2 has also a strong start, and a second little peak in month 4, probably due to some marketing initiative. But T3 is all different. It starts slowly, but then it goes on and on and on, adding up sales after a year that almost much those of the furious T1. Comparing cumulated top 25 life cycles

between two German distributors, Bookwire and Readbox, the curves differ remarkably.

Bookwire's aggregated life cycles, from titles coming predominantly from traditional publishers, have a much steeper curve, with generated revenue falling quickly after launch. Readbox with a bigger share of self-published authors who often successfully build fan communities can sustain sales much more steadily.

In The Netherlands, unit sales are spread more evenly over time, especially when compared to Canada, with e-book sales on average declining quickly after the launch. Following page:

Comparing the cumulated top 25 e-book titles, for Germany, with the top 10 indicates that ,steady' sales end up outperforming skyrockets. (Using the ,median' value, and not the ,average' assures that one exceptional title performance cannot distort the overall pattern.)

Data from Canada allow to compare cumulated overall top sales with break-out curves for selected genres. Surprisingly, the trends are strikingly in synch.

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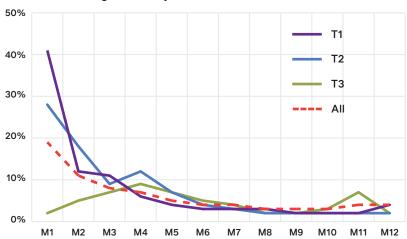
Drilling down to a per title level in life cycle analysis opens a wide realm of insights for finetuning marketing strategies: Fast sellers as much as steady sellers can be used as benchmarks for new title releases, to assess their performance, and in case adjust promotion.



LIFECYCLE OF TOP 25 TITLES IN FIRST 12 MONTHS

#GERMANY

Lifecycle (by revenue) of top e-book titles, Readbox, Germany, 2017/2018, in % of all revenue generated by a title



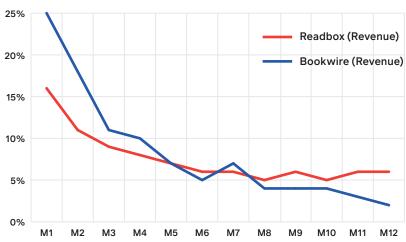
#THE NETHERLANDS

Cumulated Top 25 titles (CB, Volume)



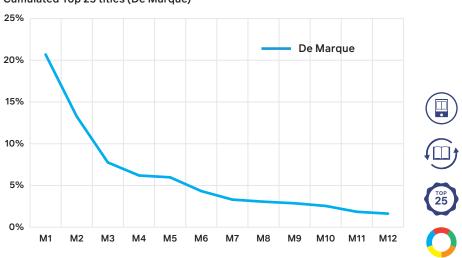
#GERMANY

Comparing Top 25 titles of Bookwire and of Readbox



#CANADA

Cumulated Top 25 titles (De Marque)

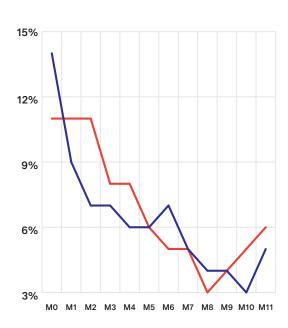


LIFECYCLE (BY REVENUE): **CUMULATED & MEDIAN PERFORMANCE OF TOP TITLES**

#GERMANY

GERMANY:

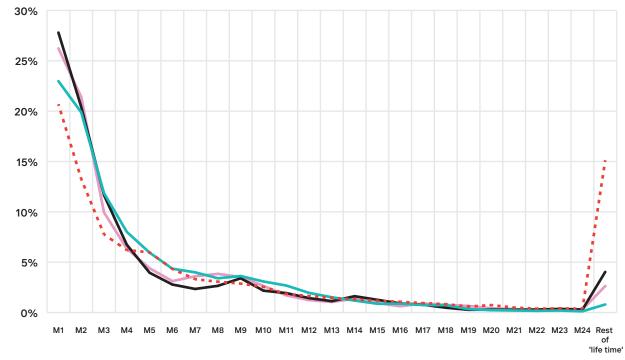
Median performance of top 10 e-book titles in first 12 months, Readbox, Germany, 2017/2018



#CANADA

CANADA:

Lifecycle for cumulated top 25 titles and break out for selected genres.













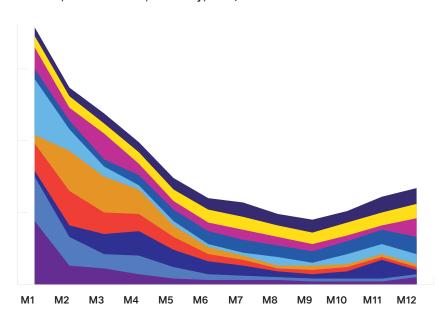




COMPARING, LIFE CYCLE' IN GERMANY AND ITALY: INSTANT-SELLERS VERSUS LONG-SELLERS

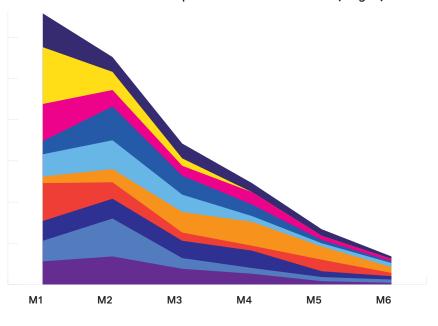
#GERMANY

Life cycle (by revenue) of Top 10 e-book titles in first 12 months after publication, in % Readbox, Germany, 2017/2018



#ITALY

Performance in revenue of Top 10 titles in first 6 months (edigita)













E-Books travel easily across borders: What to learn from foreign language imports?

Since Harry Potter becoming a top seller in the English original in Germany two decades ago, we learned that a relevant reading community embraces books in foreign languages. This may apply to e-book audiences more than for print.

Choice in e-books is abundant, as no extra cost for transport erects a barrier, and e-book audiences tend to be specifically avid readers and well-educated consumers.

With data from Ingram, the world's largest wholesaler for books, print and digital, and a global facilitator of exports and imports, the Barometer can shed light into the foreign language niche.

Comparing overall imports into five European markets, France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands and Spain, emphasizes a startling transformation from 2016 until today:

Three years ago, between 70 and 80 percent of all imports were titles from the lowest price segment, under 1€ or \$. Af-

ter a continuous shift, and driven by a steady increase in total imports over this period, three out of four units came at higher price points, with the strongest price segments set at around 9.99€, the popular level for trade paperbacks, plus another even bigger portion priced at 20€ or more.

Both broader availability of titles and more foreign language promotion on retail platforms may have helped. From the perspective of audiences, the increase in the high price ranges hints at consumers who very precisely know what they want, without bothering that much about the cost of their pick.

The argument is further supported by looking at the evolution between genres.

Nonfiction has seen a steady increase since 2016, in four of the surveyed countries. Only in The Netherlands, the share of nonfiction did not grow, as it was at around 45 percent from the beginning.

Genre fiction, by contrast, which is in large parts such a predominating force in the e-book sphere, plays only a marginal role in foreign language reading, with the only exception being die-hard German fans of science-fiction and fantasy.

These patterns are further sustained by looking into revenue by genre.

Nonfiction once again rules the game, together with ,other', which probably includes more specialized categories, from academic to professional.



IMPORTS INTO EUROPE:

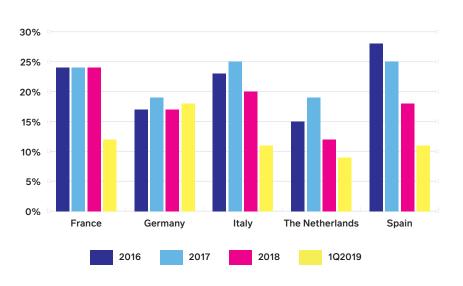
EXEMPLARY PRICE CATEGORIES AND SHARE OF VOLUME, 2016 - 1Q2019, INGRAM



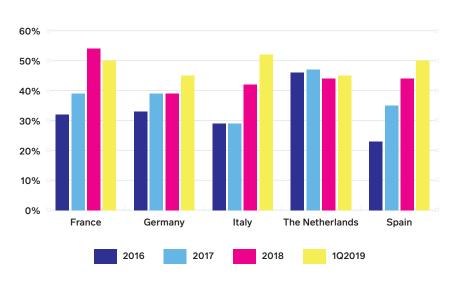
IMPORTS INTO EUROPE:

COMPARING SHARE OF GENRE CATEGORIES IN VOLUME IN %, 2016 - 1Q2019, INGRAM

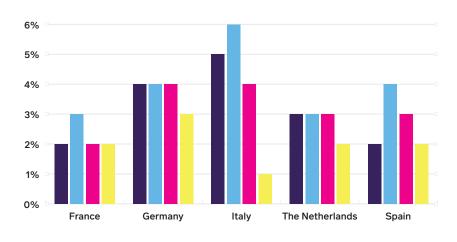
GENERAL FICTION



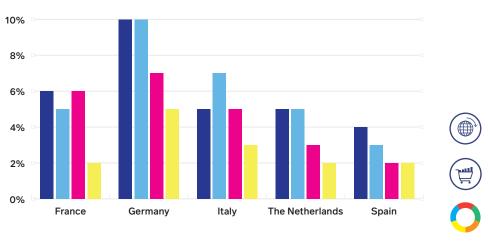
NONFICTION



ROMANCE

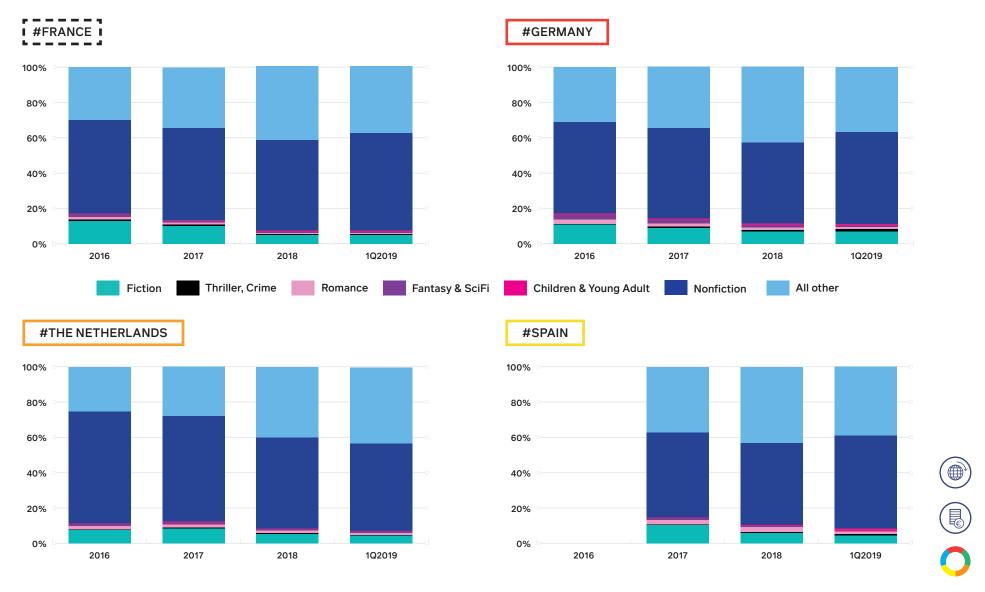


FANTASY & SCIFI



IMPORTS INTO EUROPE:

REVENUE SHARE OF EXEMPLARY GENRE CATEGORIES, 2016 - 1Q2019, INGRAM



Digital audiobooks in Germany The new growth segment that is rapidly expanding digital

Digital audiobooks, both for download and in streaming, have rapidly gained traction with a broad readership in English language markets. Now audiobooks see similar dynamics in several European countries, notably in Germany.

44 percent of adult Americans have listened to an audiobook in 2018, according to a survey by the US Audio Publishers Association.

The market dynamics reflect well how the entire ecosystem around audiobooks has been re-created in recent years. Digital audio can be purchased as an individual title, or come with a subscription. With mobile gaining popularity quickly, audio is in a consumer's pocket all the time. And with smart speakers, audio has found a new paramount presence in the home, available to all generations.

The first Barometer survey on audiobooks is based on data of just one distributor, Bookwire - a sponsor of this report, and statistics cover only digital sales, no subscriptions. So the scope is limited.

Nevertheless, it allows to portraying some fundamental patterns of the business and the common usage.

The German audiobook market represents 180 m€ in revenue, according to research by Bookwire, and accounts for 30 to 50 percent of all digital revenue for participating publishers.

Growth in digital audiobooks has been remarkable lately, in both generated revenue and in units sold.

	Revenue	Units
2016 > 2017	20%	41%
2017 > 2018	38%	33%

The audiobook audience is estimated at 18 million adults in 2018, up from 4 million in 2016, with 83 percent listening to an audiobook at least one time every month. (Kantar Emnid)

On the following pages and figures, we follow the same approach as with e-books, looking at

The sales distribution along the calendar year, for the past three years;

Comparisons between volume (units) and value (revenue) in specifically popular genre categories;

The relevance of pricing strategies in all of consumer audiobooks, and in the key genres.

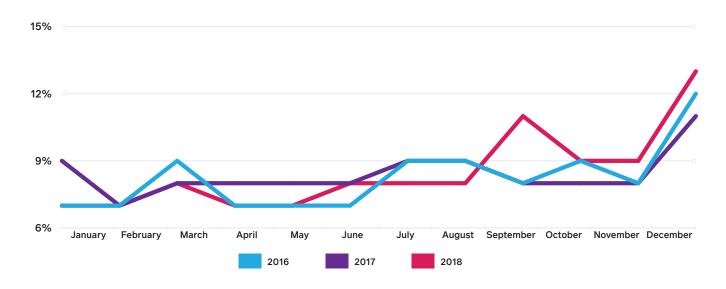
Audiobook usages, and as a result the audiobook calendar differs significantly from the consumption of e-books. 53 percent of audiobook listeners tap into their audiobooks on public transport, 50 percent also while driving in a car.

The strongest seasons for audiobooks are early spring, summer vacations and the end of the year.

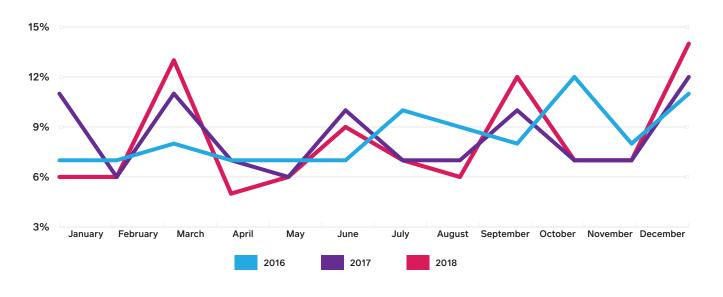




GERMANY AUDIO % OF SALES (VALUE), 2016 + 2017 + 2018



GERMANY AUDIO % OF COPIES (VOLUME), 2016 + 2017 + 2018











Genre preferences are different in digital audiobooks and e-books

The curse of overwelming pre-dominance of genre fiction in e-books is not repeated in audiobooks.

The promising trend is an increasing diversification in genre preferences.

Audiobook consumers have remarkably different preferences than readers.

First of all, units and generated revenue are largely in synch - with no low-price genre complicating the the picture.

Romance, fantasy and science-fiction occupy pretty marginal sales.

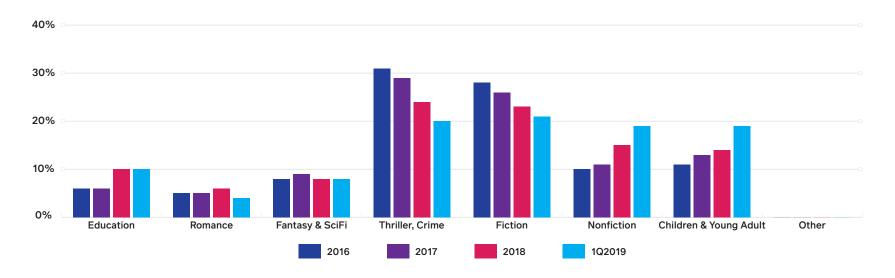
The main appeal of listening to a book seems to be to get drawn into great narratives. Thrillers and crime, general fiction, and a fair share of nonfiction are at the center.

Interest in nonfiction is on the rise, and so are the children and young adult segments.

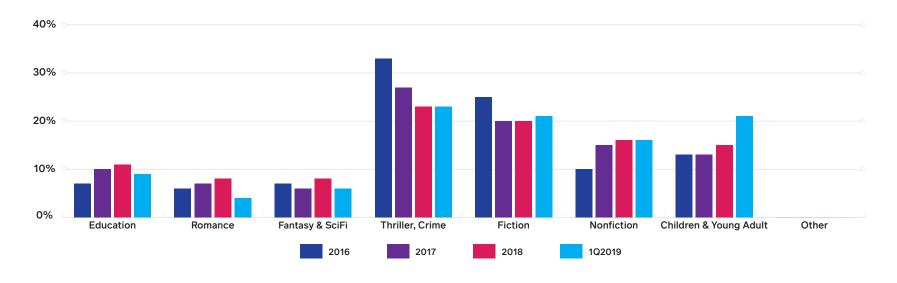
In a second projection of genre preferences from 2016 to 1Q2019, we see even more clearly how a diverse and balanced field emerges in audiobooks.

Education appears as an open question so far. Educational publishers probably need to be more experiental to better understand how audio can support the learning environment.

GERMANY AUDIO VALUE % PER GENRE



GERMANY AUDIO VOLUME % PER GENRE



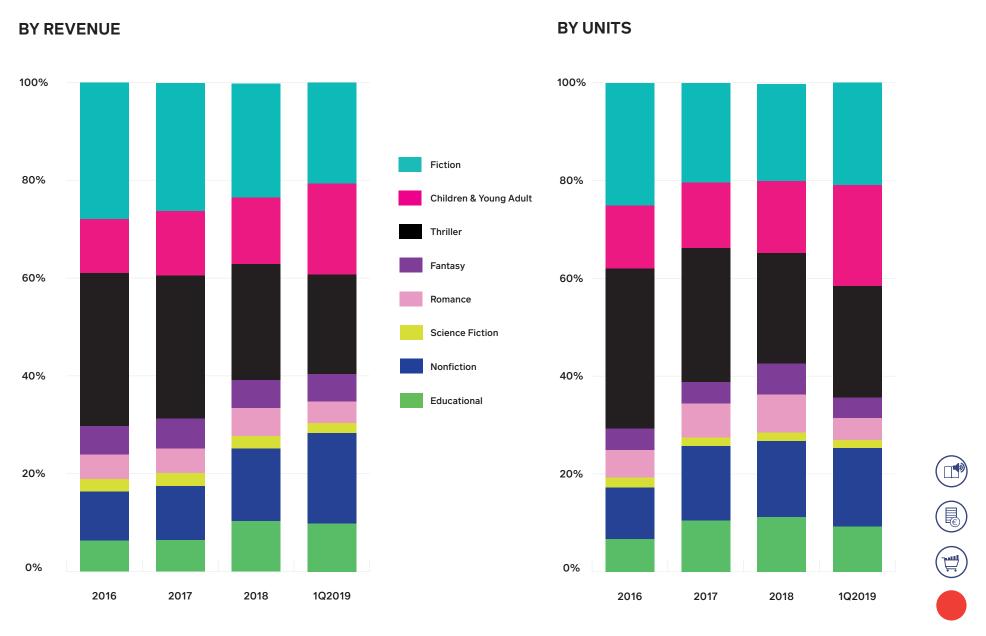








AUDIOBOOKS IN GERMANY BY CATEGORY OR GENRE (2016 - 1Q2019)



Pricing works differently in audiobooks **Experimenting with price has only started**

Audiobooks have a well established high price segment above the 20 € line. But children & young adult have some good music also playing at a low price sweet spot.

General trade and genre fiction are two Most bets, however, are put on the high largely different and separate worlds, price side at 20 € and more, in both genwhen it comes to audiobooks.

In children & young adult, a clear peak is An interesting question will be to ask and more.

Interestingly, no significant low price peak emerges in revenue generated from genre fiction.

However in units sold we find a clear peak at the low price end, in both general trade (with thrillers and nonfiction, yet not in children and young adult), but again in romance and in fantasy & SciFi. Some publishers have obviously started to experiment with low pricing as a marketing tool, for instance in serial titles, repeating a common practice in e-books.

eral trade, and in genre fiction.

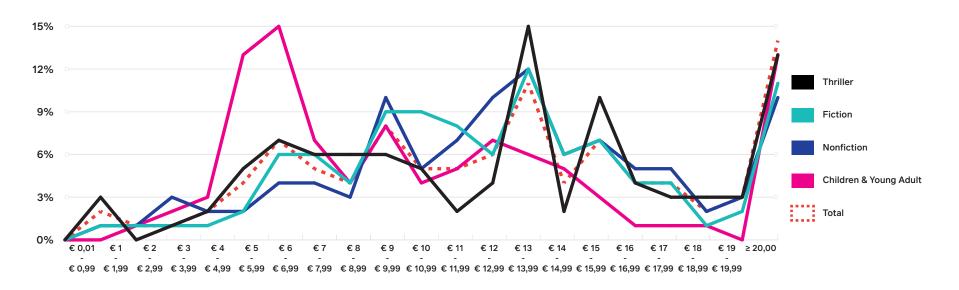
set between 5 and 7 €, followed by a sec- wether audiobooks will cannibalize hardond peak on the high price end at 20 € cover sales, similar to what e-books did with paperbacks.

> Further developments need to be tracked.

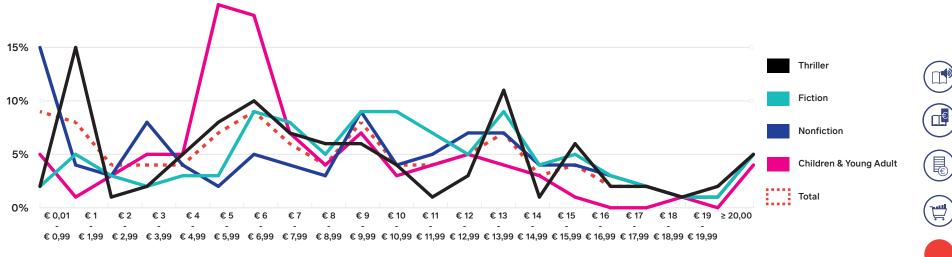




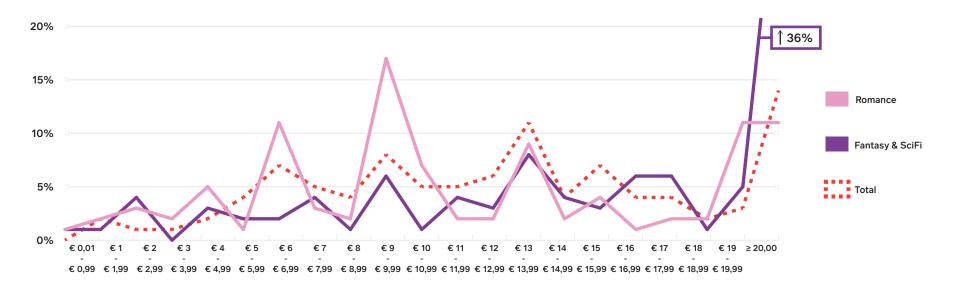
GERMANY AUDIO > GENERAL TRADE VALUE 2018 BY PRICE SEGMENT



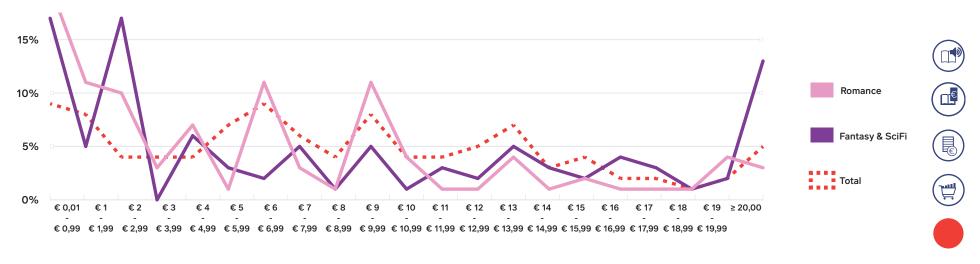
GERMANY AUDIO > GENERAL TRADE VOLUME 2018 BY PRICE SEGMENT



GERMANY AUDIO > GENRE FICTION VALUE 2018 BY PRICE SEGMENT



GERMANY AUDIO > GENRE FICTION VOLUME 2018 BY PRICE SEGMENT



Conclusions and outlook

Combining data and analysis of e-books and of audiobooks open the perspective on a much wider market of 'digital consumer books' across formats, business models and channels to the consumer.

The ambition of the Barometer 2019 has been to develop a broader view on digital.

From both the angle of a consumer and of a publisher (and of course, of an author) format' has lost its central significance.

Already in the past, juxtaposiong print and ,e' was a questionable concept. Any state-of-the-art digital retail platform is offering consumers an array of different appearances of a story, and this tendency is likely to become ever more prevalent. Cross-marketing between books, movie adaptations or even games will become commonplace.

But recognizing the specifics of each format, each price segment and each retail channel is getting critical to design efficient marketing and customer approaches. The Barometer is meant to provide a tool to better navigate these complexities. However, we are far from satisfied with what we have achieved so far, as the landscape that we are allowed to map at this stage has far too few islands in the rough and uncharted waters all around.

We will work on further expanding the territories and the data sources.

Also, we will need to find ways to include streaming and subscription models in our observations.

Therefore we look out to finding new partners, new data and new support. And not to forget, more critical feedback.

The next iteration of our work will be the **Global Audiobook and eBook report**, which we prepare for release in September 2019.

This Global report will be more descriptive than the very much data focused Barometer.

The descriptive approach will allow to btter shed light on trends and developments regarding e-book and audiobook markets in sectors and territories where we have few, or hardly any data. So the Barometer and the Global reports will complement each other.

Stay tuned! Register for our updates at www.global-ebook.com