

Commercial Intimacies: Influencer Culture and Digital Capital in the Contemporary Book Market

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Abstract

The contemporary book market is practically inseparable from digital culture. #BookTok creates bestsellers, and audio book streamers and publishers increasingly collaborate with influencers for marketing purposes. Since the book market is characterized by overproduction and attention has become an important currency, reaching readers is vital (Thompson 2010). 21st century book marketing is by default digital, which calls for further discussion of “this newly charged relationship between the concepts of ‘community’ and ‘commodity’” (Murray 2018), which we argue contributes to a “new public intimacy” (Marshall 2014), where parasocial relationships can be formed between influencers and followers. As a result, there is a mutual interest from both influencers and the publishing world to utilize and, to some degree, exploit the interest in social media celebrities. The intersection of the book market, digital spheres, and influencer culture opens up to new perspectives on contemporary publishing.

In this paper, we discuss the current landscape of the Swedish book market in relation to influencer culture. We have identified three types of influencers with a strong presence in the market, who represent different interests: lifestyle, cooking and interior design, and literature and writing. Via these categories, we analyze the symbiotic relationship between influencers and publishers. How do digital, printed and streamed content converge in influencer literature? What can this tell us about the relationship between content creator and reader? Following Nilsson (2022), we dissect the convergence culture integral to Swedish influencer narratives.

Keywords

Influencer Literature, Digital Capital, Contemporary Book Market

Bio

Lisa Grahn holds a PhD in comparative literature and is a senior lecturer at the Department of Literature and Rhetoric at Uppsala University. Her research interests include gender perspectives on book culture, historiography and autofiction. She has recently published “One

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