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BUKTOK AS A PR TOOL: CONTENT APPROACHES OF VIVAT PUBLISHING HOUSE

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Abstract. The article examines the role of TikTok, in particular the BookTok platform, as an important PR tool for modern Ukrainian publishing houses, with an emphasis on the activities of Vivat Publishing House. The features of the content approaches used by the publishing house to promote its books among users of this platform are analyzed. It is determined that TikTok, due to its popularity among the youth audience, is becoming a powerful channel for creating the image of the publishing house, attracting new readers, and shaping trends in the book industry. Particular attention is paid to video content that uses the emotional factor to attract attention to publications, such as book reviews or subscriber surveys. The role of interactive elements that help strengthen interaction with the audience and increase reach is also considered. The study examines the impact of cooperation with book bloggers and influencers who actively work on the platform, as well as the importance of such partnerships for shaping the image of the publishing house. In addition, the effectiveness of using specific trends that can significantly increase the visibility of Vivat publishing house content among BookTok users is analyzed. The article emphasizes the importance of adapting traditional PR methods to modern digital realities. The results of the study allow us to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of BookTok as a tool for popularizing literature and improving the image of Ukrainian publishing houses in the international arena.

Key words: TikTok, PR strategies, content marketing, social media, influencers, book marketing, digital media, branding.

Introductions. In the modern digital environment, social media platforms have become key tools for content creation and promotion. One such platform is TikTok, which has quickly gained popularity among a wide audience, including youth, and has become an important tool for brands, publishers, and cultural projects. The significance of TikTok for publishers lies in its ability to influence reading preferences and shape new trends in the book industry through the creation of communities such as BookTok, which promote books among new generations of readers.

Today, TikTok is not only an entertainment resource but also a powerful PR tool that allows publishers to actively engage their audience and increase brand visibility. The platform provides publishers with the opportunity to create viral content that can reach millions of users, as well as interact with potential readers through short videos, reviews, book trailers, book challenges, and other formats.

This article examines the role of TikTok as a PR tool for the Vivat publishing house, specifically in the context of using the platform to shape and maintain the brand image through innovative content approaches. Various strategies and practices for promoting book products through the platform are explored, as well as the interaction between the publisher and influencers, as well as BookTok users. Studying these aspects provides a deeper understanding of how social media, particularly TikTok, can transform PR strategies and influence the development of book culture.

Main part. The aim of this study is to examine the process of using TikTok, specifically the BookTok platform, as a PR tool for promoting books from the Vivat publishing house, as well as to analyze the content approaches used to build the publisher's image among the youth audience. The objectives of this research include analyzing the type and popularity of content, as well as identifying key trends and methods used to attract attention to the books. One of the main tasks is to analyze the

role of interactive elements, such as video reviews, in the development of the BookTok community and their impact on the promotion of Vivat's literature.

For a detailed analysis of TikTok's use as a PR tool, the content analysis method was applied, which allowed the exploration of various content formats that create visibility for the publisher's brand and engage new readers. The social analysis method helped examine the role of the publisher's collaboration with influencers and book bloggers, as well as understand how social media shapes cultural trends in the book industry. An important aspect of the research is also studying how video content can enhance the publisher's image.

Additionally, the study explored the role of specific content strategies, such as emotional appeals and informative elements, which build audience attachment to the content. A content strategy that includes interaction with subscribers not only increases the visibility of posts but also influences the formation of deeper relationships between the publisher and readers.

The research also explored how BookTok can impact traditional marketing for the publisher and whether this channel could become the primary source of PR promotion for books. The study showed that successful use of social media platforms such as TikTok allows publishers to create significant visibility and interact with a broader audience.

As a result of the research, it was concluded that TikTok can be a powerful tool for promoting Ukrainian publishers, particularly Vivat, and plays a key role in developing modern PR strategies in the book industry. The use of platforms like BookTok, considering current content strategies, can positively influence the brand's image and ensure effective engagement with a youth audience. All of this happens in close collaboration with book bloggers who are involved in promoting the publisher.

Materials and methods of research. This study extensively draws on the works of recognized scholars, such as Merga M.K., Townend K., and others, who analyze the phenomenon of the TikTok platform and its impact on the literary process, particularly on the formation of the BookTok community. Scholars note that TikTok, especially its BookTok segment, contributes to the development of new social and cultural interactions, which have become crucial for the evolution of modern media platforms, particularly in terms of their influence on readers.

In the context of studying BookTok, the research by authors such as Dera, J., S. Brouwer, and A. Welling is crucial. They emphasize how videos on the platform can alter young people's reading preferences, particularly among school students, as well as the role of TikTok algorithms in shaping reading habits. They argue that such videos can increase interest in reading, even among those who do not have a habit of regular reading.

The study by Stewart S. examines the evolution of BookTok, especially regarding changes in genre preferences, when the popularity of literature shifted from young adult genres to dark romance, fantasy, and thrillers. This reflects changes in the demographics of users, which lead to shifts in literary trends on the platform.

Particular attention is given not only to the content promoted on the platform but also to specific practices, such as creating video reviews and recommendations that often emphasize the emotional experience of readers rather than an analytical approach to the text, as noted by Martens, M., G. Balling, and K. Higgason. This creates a new paradigm for literary discussions, which has significant implications for contemporary media culture.

Thus, this study adopts an interdisciplinary approach that combines media dependency theories, social media analysis, research on literary influences on young audiences, and the specific cultural changes brought about by the TikTok platform, particularly its influence on literary tastes and reading practices.

For a detailed analysis of TikTok's use as a PR tool, the content analysis method was applied, allowing the exploration of various content formats created by the publishing house to shape its brand and attract new readers. This method helps identify which types of content most contribute to the

popularization of books and the publisher's brand on the platform. An important role is also played by social analysis, which allows the study of how the publisher's collaboration with influencers and book bloggers impacts the popularization of books and the brand, as well as the formation of cultural trends in the book industry.

The social analysis method helps understand how the TikTok platform fosters new interactions between publishers, their audiences, and media figures, such as book bloggers and influencers, who actively influence the perception of books and the publisher's image.

These methods allow for a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of using TikTok as a PR tool, particularly in the context of increasing the popularity of literary brands and forming long-term connections with the audience.

Results and discussion. TikTok, a platform owned by the Chinese conglomerate ByteDance, began actively conquering Western markets in mid-2018. Initially, its audience consisted mainly of Generation Z members, and the primary content focused on short humorous videos. However, TikTok quickly became a cultural hub for various subcultures, thanks to its unique algorithm that connects users based on shared interests and behavioral traits.

One of the most influential communities on the platform became BookTok – a subculture focused on literature. As noted by Merga (2021:5), the majority of BookTok users are aged between 13 and 27, although many do not disclose their age in their profiles. However, recent data from the United States and the UK show that the majority of the community is now made up of women aged 25-34 – indicating that the average user age has increased (Townend, 2024).

As of December 2023, the hashtag "#BookTok" had over 200 million views. Studies confirm that BookTok videos have a significant impact on readers' book purchasing decisions. This trend has prompted publishers and booksellers to adapt their marketing strategies to cater to the popularity of books on the platform. A characteristic feature of BookTok is the virality of literary works, many of which were published years or even decades ago. For example, Donna Tartt's «The Secret History» (1992) gained renewed popularity thanks to the "dark academia" trend. Madeline Miller's «The Song of Achilles» also achieved success in this way. Originally published in 2012 with a sales figure of about 20,000 copies, after the book went viral on BookTok, it sold approximately 10,000 copies per week in 2021.

Researchers note that the BookTok phenomenon contributes to a rise in interest in reading. In a study by Dera, J., S. Brouwer, and A. Welling (2023:107) conducted among 173 ninth-graders in the Netherlands, it was found that popular BookTok videos had a greater impact on students who were already interested in reading. Students who did not read often responded positively to such videos.

In the early stages of BookTok's development, the repertoire of its users mainly consisted of books targeted at young audiences, which aligned with the demographic structure of the community (Merga, 2021). However, in recent years, the share of young adult literature has gradually decreased, making way for genres such as dark romance, fantasy, and thrillers. This change could be linked to the rise in the average age of users on the platform.

Unlike the traditional literary canon, which is emphasized in education, the BookTok canon has its own peculiarities (Jerasa & Boffone, 2021:223). Maddox, J., and F. Gill (2023) note that new participants in the community need to familiarize themselves with the works of certain authors to stay aligned with BookTok trends. This creates a certain hierarchy within readers' preferences and the community. For example, authors such as Colleen Hoover and Sarah J. Maas are considered essential to keeping up with popular trends. Therefore, to fully integrate into the community, a minimum level of reading experience with these authors is necessary.

The BookTok canon not only fosters a sense of unity among its members but also serves as an important starting point for the platform's algorithm, which recommends books based on popular trends. These recommendations differ significantly from the traditional literary canon, which many

scholars classify as «classical», as they emphasize newer authors and genres with an "escapist" quality. Such genres include romance, romantic comedy, fantasy, and young adult literature, predominantly written by contemporary female authors (Stewart, S., 2024).

A study by Goodreads, one of the leading applications for tracking book popularity, shows that there has been a significant increase in the amount of romantic literature on the platform. Among 600,000 books analyzed, 216,830 were classified as romantic. Interestingly, the term "romance" as a literary category gained popularity thanks to Goodreads, after which it spread to social media platforms, particularly TikTok (Porter J.D., 2023).

One of the most popular subgenres of romantic literature within the BookTok community is fantasy. Examples of the most popular epic fantasy series include Sarah J. Maas's «A Court of Thorns and Roses», which regularly occupies top spots on romantic literature lists.

An important aspect of BookTok is its multi-faceted nature, combining oral text, written comments, musical accompaniment, and visual elements. This approach ensures a high level of interaction between viewers and the content. Users can like, comment, or share videos, and tag friends in posts, etc. As of mid-2024, the duration of videos created within TikTok was up to 60 seconds, while videos uploaded from devices could last up to 3 minutes – meaning they could be short yet informative (Merga). Recommended videos aim to encourage the audience to read new books. These videos are often created in the form of lists with titles such as «Books Worth Special Attention», «Best Books Released This Fall», or «Recommendations for Lovers». Another format is autobiographical, where the creator shares personal reading stories, such as «Best Dark Fantasy Books», etc.

Some recommendation videos are dedicated to a single book, bringing them closer to reviews. Review videos often focus on emotional impressions of the book rather than its rational analysis, which traditionally includes thematic or stylistic features of the text (Martens, Bolling & Higgason, 2022:716). The emotional aspect is key in BookTok reviews, making them unique compared to reviews on other platforms.

One of the tactile aspects of reading culture that has received significant attention in BookTok research is the phenomenon of «shelfies». This is a type of selfie where users showcase their bookshelves or specific book sections. As Dezuanni, M. L., B. Reddan, L. Rutherford, and A. Schoonens (2022) note, these images are often highly stylized: books are arranged in color-coordinated groups, or they are surrounded by decorations, jewelry, etc., creating a specific atmosphere and aesthetic for the books. In some videos, books appear against the backdrop of a collection of other books, which serves both as décor and part of the narrative. For example, a book may be carefully taken from the shelf or stack, with the focus on the cover.

In certain videos, the creator's hand holding a book might appear, or the process of choosing a book, flipping through it, or showing it with no text or voiceover. Sometimes text elements are added to highlight plot points or emphasize the specific features of a particular edition.

A separate genre consists of videos that focus on reading during travel. These videos resemble traditional vlogs, a long-form content format on YouTube. Unlike YouTube, where the creator usually speaks directly to the camera, TikTok allows for a more interactive experience. These videos show the process of choosing a book, reading it, and even thoughts after finishing it. Moments unrelated to reading, such as snacking or setting up a cozy environment, may also be added.

There is a genre where the creator narrates the story of a book from the perspective of a character, creating the impression that the events happened to them personally. The plot is presented dramatically, ending with the book's cover and the author's name. This is one of the few formats in which a physical book is not required, as the cover is used as a full-screen visual element.

As noted by Martens, Bolling, and Higgason (2022), reading on BookTok takes on a sensory and tactile form. Videos often feature the sound of pages turning, as well as images of comfort associated with reading, such as special chairs, pillows, or even stacks of books.

One particularly popular practice is «tabbing», where readers mark significant passages in a book using colorful sticky notes. Videos focus not on the content of these passages but on the result – showcasing decorated books. Research by Asplund, S. B., B. L. Egeland, and C. Olin (2024:642) confirms that such online representations influence real-life reading practices.

For Ukrainian publishers, platforms like TikTok have become essential tools in promoting new books, particularly among younger generations. One of the most notable examples of effective use of TikTok in this field is Vivat publishing house. By integrating into the youth segment, the publisher increases its audience reach. Books that gain popularity in Western BookTok are selected for translation, with several key factors determining their potential in the Ukrainian market. The first important criterion is the viral nature of the book on BookTok. Books that achieve significant popularity through active discussions and high view counts are more likely to be translated. If a book remains in trends for an extended period and is actively discussed on the platform, publishers consider it promising for Ukrainian readers. The second factor is the commercial success of the book in Western markets. Publishers assess how well a book sells in the US and Europe, as this is another indicator of its potential success in Ukraine. High sales figures in Western countries motivate Ukrainian publishers to acquire licenses for translation. Genre demand among Ukrainian readers is also important. Publishers consider which genres are currently popular in Ukraine and whether they match those trending in Western BookTok. If a book belongs to a genre well-received by Ukrainian audiences, its chances of being translated increase significantly. Accessibility of translation rights is also crucial. If rights to a book are available for purchase without restrictions, publishers can quickly decide on a translation. When rights are held by large international publishers, it can complicate the process, prompting Ukrainian publishers to turn to lesser-known authors whose books also have the potential to become popular after translation.

Overall, the selection of books for translation depends on a combination of virality on BookTok, commercial success in international markets, audience genre preferences, and the availability of translation rights.

In the study, it is important to highlight the publisher's page, the bookstore chains, and BookTok influencers who also promote the publisher.

In the study, it is important to highlight the publisher's page, the publisher's bookstore network, and also the book bloggers who talk about the publisher. Among the popular Book-Tok bloggers who dedicate a significant portion of their content to the publisher, the following 12 should be highlighted: ms.jilena, mari.inich, marislyshyk, viki.books, booknyta, cusomia, gavrish.nastya, loginirara, itsmeorlovska, bookfaity.ali, eslavasabio, and stepova_rusalka. On average, videos about the publisher account for 2% to 6% of their content. Most of these are book reviews, either in the format of showing the book held by the creator or in a vlog-like format where the channel's author appears on video with the book.

Some bloggers feature other video formats. For example, ms.jilena has videos about the book box «The Crystal Castle», exchanging Russian-language books at bookstores for discounts, and a «shopping at Vivat» format. viki.books has videos about promotions in the Vivat bookstore. loginirara has videos about «scary surprises from Vivat» for Halloween. bookfaity.ali features videos about bookstore openings (which is also present in stepova.rusalka's content), a selection of Vivat thrillers, and information about the “books by weight” promotion. Eslavasabio has a video on one of the most popular Vivat series, Ukrainian classics.

Books (8) that appear in a third or more of the selected bloggers' content were analyzed. These are among the most popular genres on BookTok, where fantasy books represent 3 titles («The Cruel Prince», «A Court of Thorns and Roses», «Ninth House»), romantic literature – 2 books («It Ends with Us» and «The Love Hypothesis»), and contemporary fiction – another 3 books (these are hard to categorize, except for «Housemaid,» which can be classified as a thriller; «My Dark Vanessa», «Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow»).

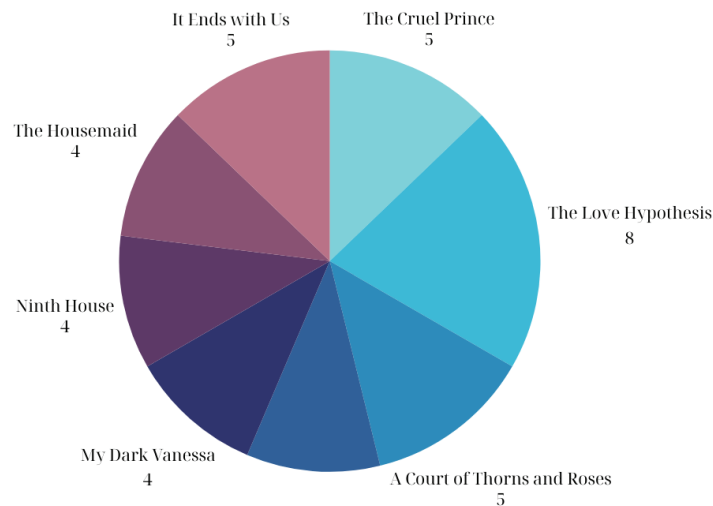


Diagram 1. Vivat books mentioned by several bloggers

It is also possible to highlight the popularity of genres based on the mention of books in videos (across all bloggers, in percentage terms). The largest shares will be attributed to contemporary romance, fantasy, thrillers, and romance novels. These bloggers have a total of 73 videos, in which a genre can be identified.

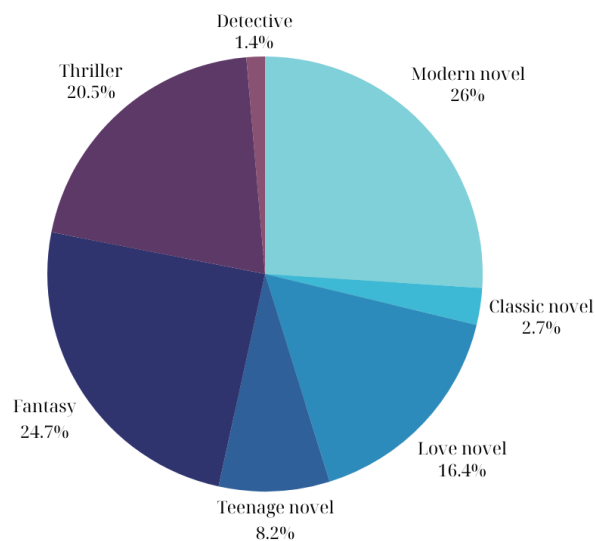


Diagram 2. Percentage of books of various genres among the content of selected book talkers

This further confirms the thesis about genre diversity, which leads to the conclusion that Vivat successfully targets the BookTok audience as one of its main target audiences. This can be supported by referring to BookTok book rankings.

The most illustrative is the Goodreads ranking of the most popular BookTok books, where 5 books published and translated by Vivat («A Court of Mist and Fury», «Six of Crows», «The Cruel Prince», «A Court of Thorns and Roses», «A Court of Wings and Ruin») appear among the top 10 out of a hundred. All of these are part of fantasy series, with three of them being part of the same series, A Court of Thorns and Roses.

When considering the entire list of books, 23 out of 100 were published by Vivat, which makes up about a quarter. This proportion becomes especially significant when considering that half of the books on the list have yet to be translated and published in Ukrainian. Therefore, Vivat's closest competitor, KSD, publishes fewer of the most popular TikTok books.

The TikTok accounts of Vivat are also worth special attention, with two accounts—one for bookstores and one for the publishing house itself. For analysis, 100 of the most popular videos were reviewed. Vivatbookstore has 11,000 followers and is run by blogger PROLIT, who has 30.7k followers on TikTok (and 36.1k on YouTube). The blogger mainly specializes in scientific and popular formats of videos about publishing houses. In general, the content of this channel can be divided into memes, promotions, announcements, interactive, recommendations, social actions, videos with bloggers, and also original formats that are hard to categorize elsewhere—specifically, scientifically popular information about books and authors.

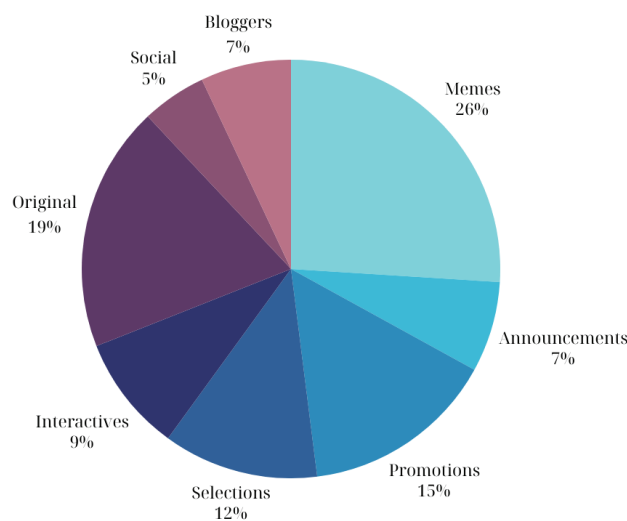


Diagram 3. Distribution of content categories on the Vivatbookstore page

The TikTok account of the bookstore is maximally targeted at the younger generation, which is the dominant audience. Accordingly, a quarter of all videos consist of viral content. Promotional videos, giveaways, and original content that is hard to categorize are also very popular. The popularity of such content once again proves that a light and casual presentation style is the most demanded among readers.

Vivat_book is the publishing house's page, run by blogger booknyta (33.9k and 25.7k followers, respectively). She also provides book reviews of the publishing house, but they are not the dominant part of the content. There are several differences between this account and the previous one – more than a third of the content consists of announcements (this also includes preorders), while other types of content are approximately equally popular, with memes being the second most frequent.

In summary, it can be noted that the profiles have a clear division regarding the most popular content. They emphasize different aspects in their publication, which allows attracting new readers to the information field in an informal way (through memes) while also providing information about new releases and offers.

Discussion. Identifying changes in the strategic approaches to promoting Ukrainian publishing houses through the BookTok platform can be achieved using various methods and techniques, including:

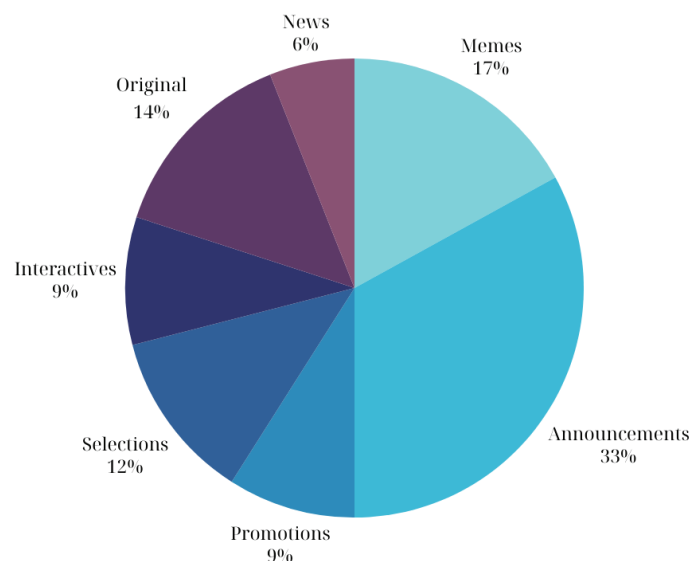


Diagram 4. Distribution of content categories on the Vivat_book page

Content Analysis on BookTok: This allows for identifying popular trends and changes in the selected content, which influences user feedback. Determining the most discussed genres and authors enables predicting which books will be in demand among Ukrainian readers.

Monitoring Interactions Between Publishers and Bloggers: This helps identify the most effective ways to engage with the audience. Recognizing successful collaboration models allows publishers to adapt their promotional strategies accordingly.

Analyzing the Influence of Authors on Book Popularity: It shows that on BookTok, the authors' personalities play a crucial role. This opens new opportunities for developing marketing strategies focused on building a strong visual brand.

Evaluating BookTok's Effectiveness as a Channel for Social Responsibility: By assessing how books addressing socially important issues receive feedback and support on the platform, it is possible to understand BookTok's role in shaping a responsible image for Ukrainian publishing houses.

By combining these methods, publishers can adapt their strategies to the realities of the modern media space and effectively use BookTok to expand their audience. It is also crucial that, through constant analysis of content and trends on the platform, publishers can optimize their approaches and improve the effectiveness of their promotions, focusing on what truly interests Ukrainian readers.

Conclusions. The use of TikTok as a PR tool for Ukrainian publishing houses, specifically Vivat, demonstrates the significant potential of this platform in promoting books to a young audience. The publishing house actively integrates into the popular BookTok segment, which allows it to significantly expand its reach and attract new readers. In selecting books for translation, Vivat focuses on the popularity of the content on the platform, particularly viral trends and commercial success in Western markets.

Special attention should be given to genre trends: fantasy, romance, and contemporary fiction have become the main genres that are popular among TikTok users and dominate the selection of books for translation. Books that are popular in Western markets (e.g., in the US or Europe) have a higher chance of receiving a license for the Ukrainian market. This is particularly true for books such as «The Cruel Prince», «Ninth House», and «It Ends wit Us» which are actively discussed on the platform.

Collaboration with popular BookTok bloggers is a crucial element of Vivat's strategy. Bloggers who frequently post content about the publisher's books help shape a positive perception among their

followers, contributing to increased sales and the popularization of new releases. Some of the most active bloggers creating content about Vivat books include ms.jilena, mari.inich, viki.books, loginirara, and others. Their reviews and videos announcing new publications or promotions add value to the brand and maintain interest in the publisher's products.

An analysis of the publisher's TikTok accounts, such as Vivatbookstore and Vivat_book, shows a clear differentiation of content based on the audience. The Vivatbookstore profile actively uses viral content, promotions, and giveaways to engage the younger generation, while the Vivat_book account focuses on announcements, pre-orders, and more formal content. This segmentation allows the publisher to effectively work with different audience segments and maintain high levels of engagement.

As a result, TikTok becomes an important tool for promoting Vivat's books, as it not only popularizes individual works but also shapes the brand image among young people. With the help of influencers who actively collaborate with the publisher, Vivat successfully attracts new readers and builds the popularity of its books in the Ukrainian market, focusing on current genre and cultural trends.

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