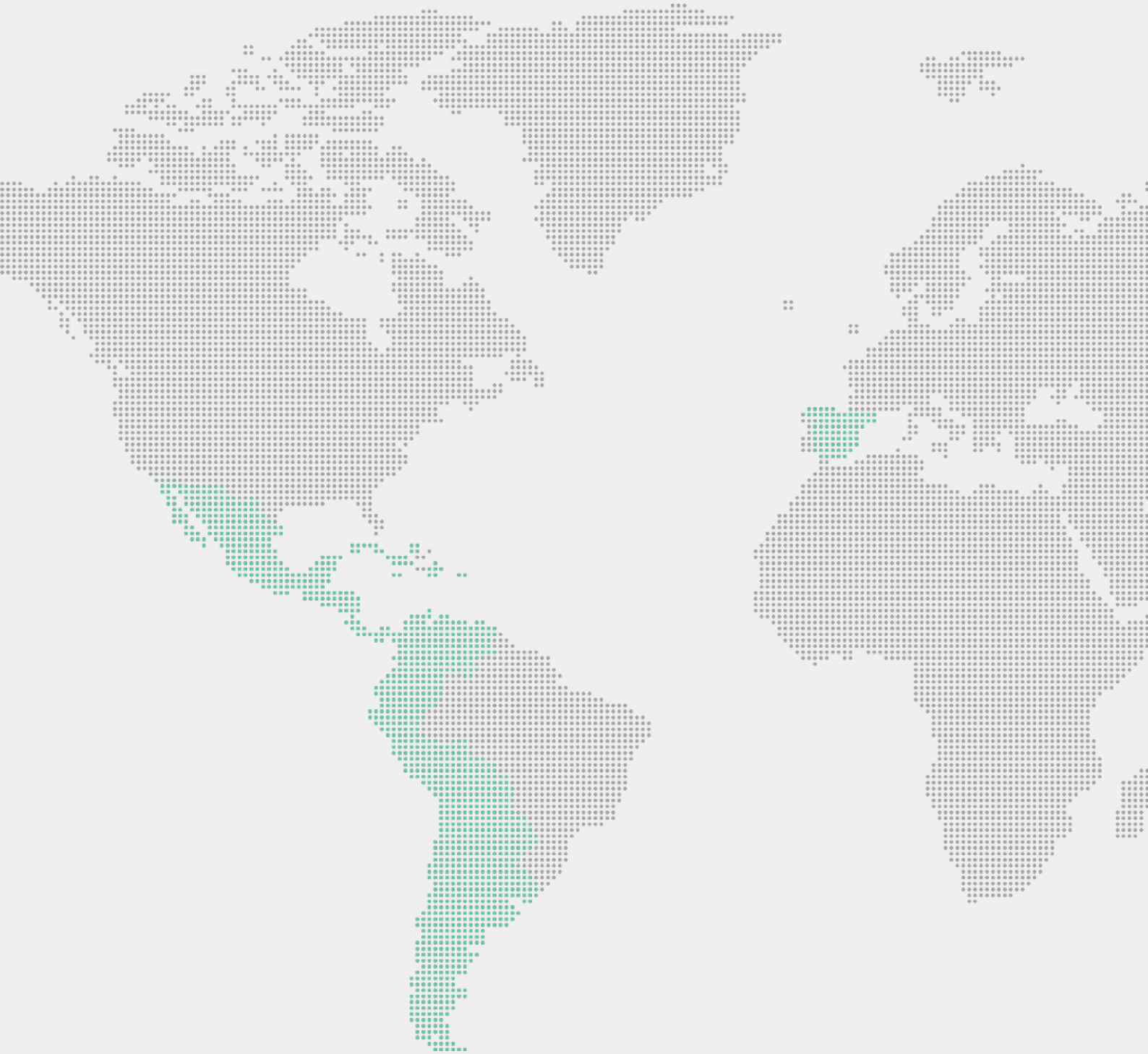
Bookwire

Annual Report 2025

Barometer of the Spanish-language Digital Publishing Market



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1. Introduction

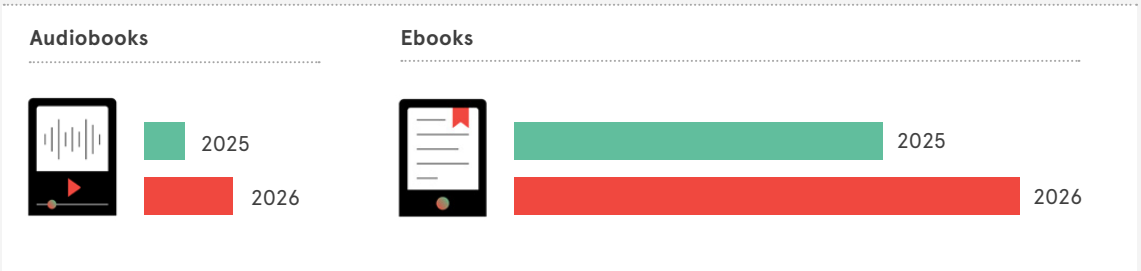
It is a pleasure to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Bookwire Report with all of you with the launch of the 2025 edition. Once again, at Bookwire we have conducted a comprehensive study of the Spanish-language digital publishing sector with the aim of drawing conclusions from objective market data that will help boost the profitability and visibility of the thousands of ebook and audiobook catalogs we have distributed since 2010.
The Bookwire Report 2025 covers virtually the entire Spanish-language digital publishing market, a core commitment of ours since the publication of the first edition a decade ago. Thanks to the support of our clients—ranging from the broad ecosystem of independent publishers to major groups operating on both sides of the Atlantic—we are able to continue publishing this industry-leading report.
We invite you to consult, discuss, and share the most comprehensive and rigorous analysis to understand the Spanish-language digital book market.

Welcome to the Bookwire 2025 Report!

1.1. The Bookwire Ecosystem

In 2025, Bookwire has distributed more than **1,600 publishing imprints** from Spain, Mexico, and Latin America, totaling 222,000 titles: **200,000 ebooks** and **22,000 audiobooks**.

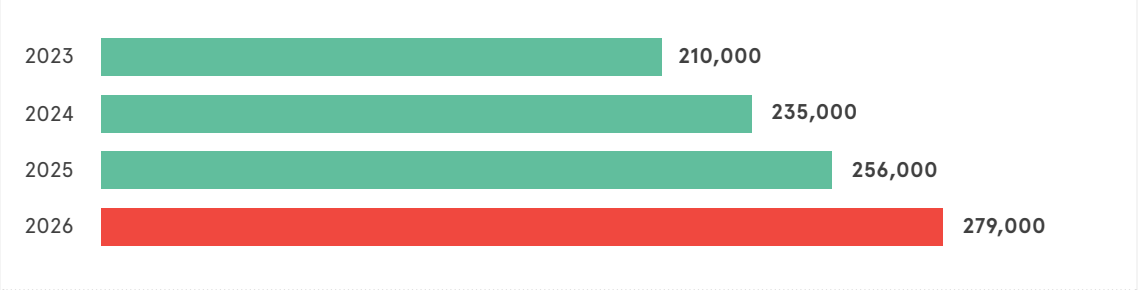
Our estimate for 2026 is that the Spanish-language ebook market will exceed 279,000* titles, while the total number of audiobooks will surpass 46,000.



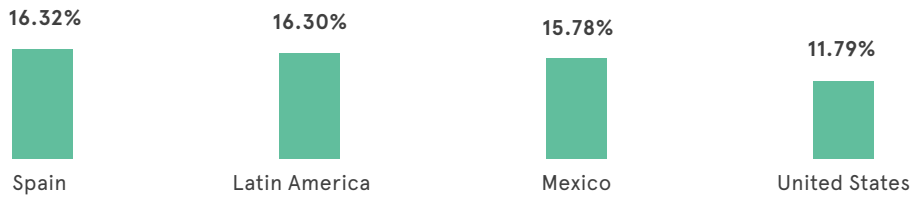
* These figures do not include Amazon self-publishing (Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing), as data for this analysis is not available.

1.2. Growth in the Number of Titles Published in Digital Format During 2025: Spain, Mexico, Latin America, and the United States

In 2025, Spanish-speaking readers had access to **8.94%** more ebook titles than in 2024.



Publishers in Spain, Mexico, and Latin America have driven nearly uniform growth in their catalogs. Spain leads the ranking with a 16.32% increase in the number of titles, followed closely by Latin America (16.30%) and, in third place, Mexico, with a 15.78% growth in its ebook catalog. Meanwhile, publishers in the United States have also expanded their digital catalog, with an increase of 11.79%.



1.3. The 2025 Digital Market at a Glance: 8 Key Points

1. **Subscription Models Gain Ground: Breathing New Life into Independent publisher's Catalogs**
   Subscription channels—both hybrid models that combine subscription and pay-per-book sales, as well as pure subscription models—have slightly increased their market share, driven primarily by the catalogs of independent publishers, who have (re)discovered their readership on these platforms.

   - Certain genres, such as romance and thriller, rank among the most popular in these environments.
   - Subscribers do not typically purchase individual ebooks; if they cannot find the book they are looking for on their platform of choice, they will tend to opt for an alternative title that is available.

2. **The Negative Impact of Currency Fluctuations**
   Throughout 2025, exchange rate volatility has put pressure on the profitability of the digital market from two fronts. In Latin America and Mexico, the depreciation of local currencies against the U.S dollar has made platform subscriptions and content purchases more expensive, reducing readers' purchasing power and limiting the ability of publishers and distributors to maintain competitive prices in the face of high costs—licenses, production, technology—that are mostly denominated in dollars.

   - Conversely, the weakness of the U.S. dollar against the euro has diminished the value of revenue generated in the United States when consolidated in euros, particularly affecting Spanish publishers with a presence in that market.

3. **The Unresolved Issue of Pre-sales in the Independent Sector**
   While major publishing groups use pre-sales as a powerful marketing tool to expand their reach, the independent publishing sector continues, to a large extent, to fail to take advantage of this strategy, despite the many benefits it offers.

   - Algorithmic benefits: Platforms prioritize titles that have metadata available prior to the publication date.
   - Increased interest: allows the announcement of upcoming releases and offers the option to pre-order or purchase the ebook in advance.
   - Inclusion in the new releases newsletter that Bookwire sends to major platforms: For a title to appear in this newsletter, which is aimed at content and marketing managers from these channels, it must be activated on Bookwire OS at least 45 days before its release.

4. **New Business Models that Revive Tradition**
   By 2025, the Skeelo platform has established itself as a channel with a dual function: generating revenue and increasing the visibility of titles, reviving special sales—a business model that, until now, had been almost exclusive to the print market. This channel enters into agreements with telecommunications companies, as well as companies in other sectors, to provide users with custom curated selections of audiobooks.

   - This strategy facilitates access to new audiences, including non-readers, and encourages their adoption of audiobook consumption.

5. **The Two Main Types of Players in Artificial Intelligence**
   In the ecosystem of artificial intelligence within the publishing and digital content industry, there are two main types of market players:

   - Large technology companies that have chosen to acquire content licenses from publishers and other entities to feed and train their large-scale language models (LLMs). In this context, editorial content becomes raw material for the development of artificial intelligence, which has given rise to a new and growing market for data rights with significant legal, economic, and ethical implications for the sector.
   - Companies that do not compete in the development of foundational models, but rather integrate AI natively into their value chain to enrich and scale their offerings. This is the case with companies like ElevenLabs, which have placed AI-powered voice synthesis at the center of their business model, enabling the generation of audiobooks and audio content with unprecedented levels of quality, speed, and voice diversity. This approach not only expands the offerings available to the end user but also democratizes

access to audio content production and redefines the creative and commercial possibilities of the entire publishing chain.

6. **Simultaneous Listening and Reading**
   Major audiobook platforms, such as Spotify and Audible, have begun to incorporate hybrid reading models that allow users to switch between listening to and reading their titles.

   - Spotify's "Page Match" feature allows users to locate their reading position in both a printed book and an ebook and sync it with the audiobook version. This process is easily done by taking a screenshot of the page, though it is currently only available to Premium users in certain regions.
   - Audible allows users to switch between reading the ebook and listening to the audiobook thanks to its "Read & Listen" feature. If the user has the ebook in their Kindle account, they can switch formats without losing their reading position.

7. **The Fastest-Growing Format: Audiobooks**
   Now is the time to invest in the only format that continues to see double-digit growth: audiobooks.

   - It is key to connect with this new audience and build the community. The Fabely platform, dedicated exclusively to audiobooks, allows publishers to engage with this user segment.
   - It is essential to boost the visibility of audiobook catalogs, and the "Premio Audiolibro Bookwire" represent an excellent opportunity to do so. Following a successful first edition, the number of awards will double this year, and the awards ceremony will take place during Liber in Barcelona.
   - It is equally important for publishers to maintain control over their audio catalogs. Publishers should avoid licensing their key titles and long-sellers in order to exploit them directly and maximize their profitability.

8. **Bookwire, the Leading Mediator Between the Industry and New Players**
   Bookwire has established itself as a key player in mediating between the publishing industry and the new players emerging from artificial intelligence and emerging business models. Through strategic agreements with companies such as ElevenLabs and Skeelo, Bookwire reinforces its commitment to protecting its clients' interests, while enabling them to take full advantage of new monetization opportunities in the digital environment. In this way, it acts not only as a secure bridge between technological innovation and publishing tradition, but also as a fundamental driver of the sector's sustainable growth.

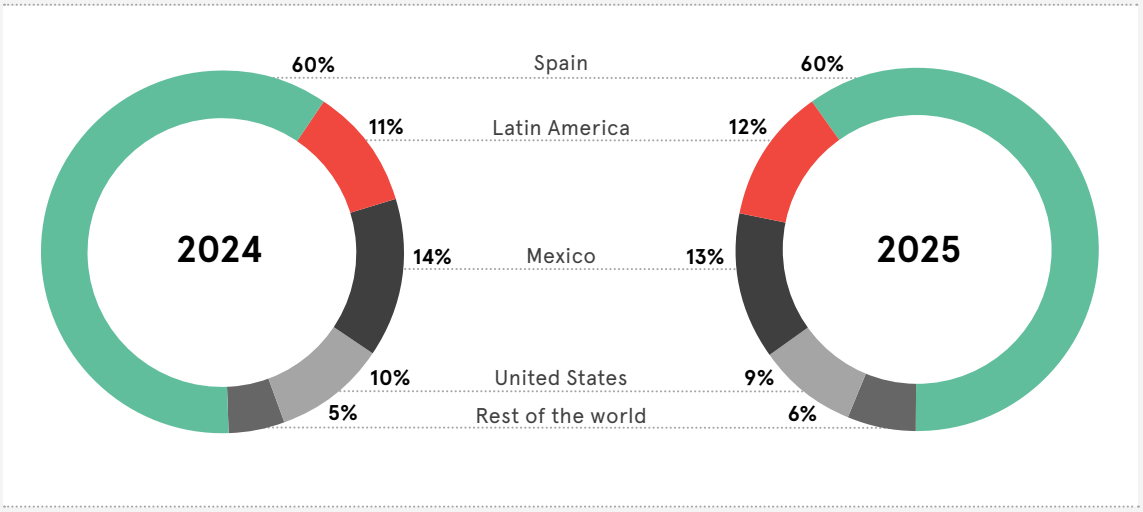
2. Evolution of Ebook Sales in 2025

2.1. Total Market Growth

The Spanish-language ebook market **has grown by 1.5% in revenue in 2025**.

This 1.5 percentage point increase reflects a clear **stabilization** of the market following several years of sustained and significant growth, such as that recorded in 2024 (10.4%) and 2023 (8.6%). The pandemic year, when digital content consumption skyrocketed, continues to hold the all-time record, with 113% growth.

2.2. Breakdown of Growth by Sales Territory

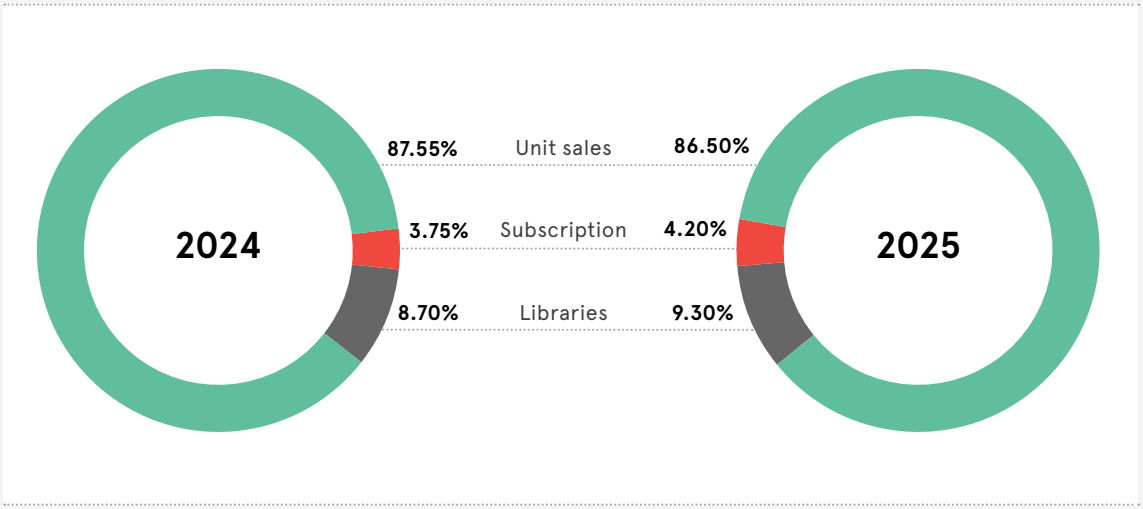


In a year marked by the stabilization of ebook sales, **non-Spanish-speaking territories** ("Rest of the World") have experienced a phenomenon uncommon in the Spanish-language sector: a 5% **increase** in ebook consumption. This is primarily driven by European countries, where ebook revenue has risen by five percentage points compared to the previous year.

Spain and **Latin America** have also recorded increases in revenue, both of around 3%.

In contrast, the ebook market in **Mexico** experienced a 1% decline in 2025. Lastly, the 5% decline in revenue in the **United States** is due to two combined factors: a slight drop in sales in dollars, exacerbated by the unfavorable dollar-euro exchange rate during 2025, and a reduction in library acquisitions of titles in non-English languages, within a political context marked by the policies of the Trump administration.

2.3. Specific Analysis of Ebook Sales in Spanish-Language Markets



Subscription Remains an Opportunity for Independent Publishing

- Small and medium-sized publishers which participate more actively in subscription platforms have found their readership through these channels. We're talking about platforms like Nextory or Kobo Plus, where genres such as romance and thriller are among the most popular.

Libraries: Stability with a Seasonal Component

- The slight growth of platforms supplying Spanish-language ebooks and audiobooks to libraries is largely due to license procurement tenders launched by public administrations in 2025.

Three Business Models Strengthening Their Positions

- The revenue breakdown between single-copy sales, subscriptions, and libraries has remained remarkably stable for over five years. In this context, the DTO (Download to Own) model continues to solidify its position as the preferred option among readers.

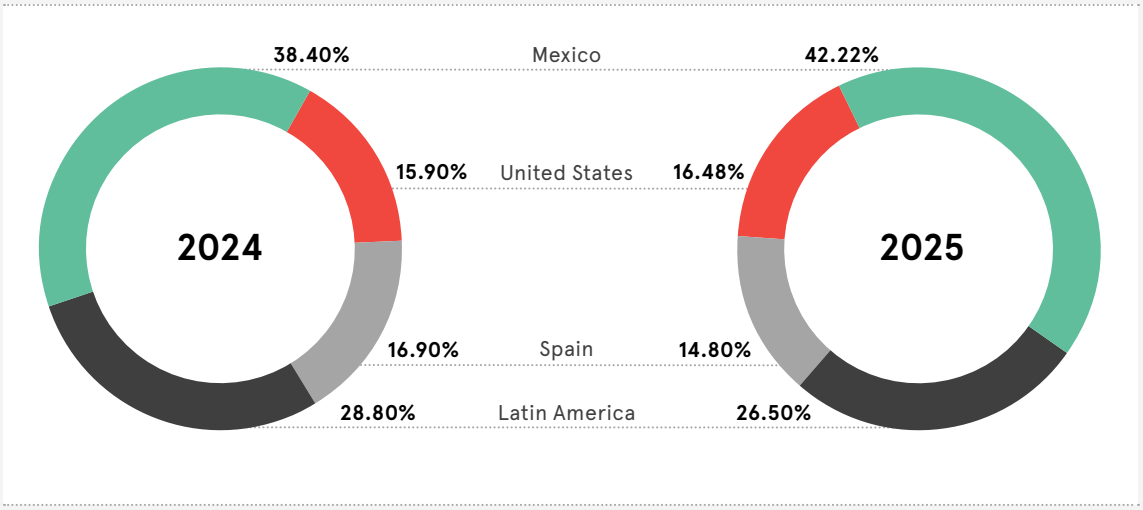
The End of Some Myths

- **"Subscriptions take away from single-copy sales":**
  The profile of the subscription reader and that of the ebook buyer are not the same. The evolution of both models shows that consumption on platforms like Nextory or Kobo Plus does not reduce single-copy sales. In fact, in environments that combine both models, such as Kobo (Kobo Plus) or Amazon (Kindle Unlimited), single-copy sales can be boosted when a title achieves high readership levels in their subscription programs.

- **"It is more profitable to delay the release of the ebook to libraries":**
  Postponing the availability of a title on library platforms primarily results in reduced consumption through these channels, as the momentum of the launch and associated marketing efforts are lost.

- **"The best strategy is to publish first in print, then release the ebook, and finally the audiobook":** The market has shown that the most effective strategy in terms of profitability is a multi-format launch. Simultaneously publishing the print, digital, and audio editions of the same title helps increase revenue across all three formats. Furthermore, platforms offering multiple formats tend to prioritize titles available in all versions from day one.

2.4. Breakdown of ebook Sales by Latin American Publishers by Region



85.20% of ebook sales by Latin American publishers took place in the Americas, **2.1%** more than in 2023.

2.5. Ebook Sales by Price Range for Spanish Publishers

Price range	2024 Sales	2025 Sales	Difference
€ 0.00 - € 2.99	3.18%	2.48%	-0.70%
€ 3.00 - € 4.99	5.98%	5.59%	-0.39%
€ 5.00 - € 7.99	21.89%	28.19%	6.30%
€ 8.00 - € 9.99	20.47%	21.66%	1.19%
€ 10.00 - € 12.99	21.30%	21.36%	0.06%
€ 13.00 - € 14.99	7.48%	6.71%	-0.77%
€ 15.00 - € 20.99	14.04%	6.93%	-7.11%
> € 20	5.66%	5.44%	-0.22%

The best-selling ebooks in 2025 were priced between **5 and 12.99 euros** > **72.86%** of the titles purchased fall within this range.

- This segment **grew by 9.20%** compared to 2024, when it accounted for 63.66% of sales.
- Ebooks priced above 15 euros are declining, as the market views this figure as a barrier; higher prices apply almost exclusively to **specialized catalogs** (technical, academic, etc.).
- The most popular price range remains between **5 and 7.99 euros**.

2.6. Ebook Sales by Price Range from Latin American Publishers

Price range	2024 Sales	2025 Sales	Difference
€ 0.00 - € 2.99	3.22%	3.89%	0.67%
€ 3.00 - € 4.99	6.39%	6.67%	0.28%
€ 5.00 - € 7.99	18.61%	18.10%	-0.51%
€ 8.00 - € 9.99	17.71%	18.66%	0.95%
€ 10.00 - € 12.99	21.29%	19.81%	-1.48%
€ 13.00 - € 14.99	8.72%	9.09%	0.37%
€ 15.00 - € 20.99	17.69%	14.60%	-3.09%
> € 20	6.37%	9.18%	2.81%

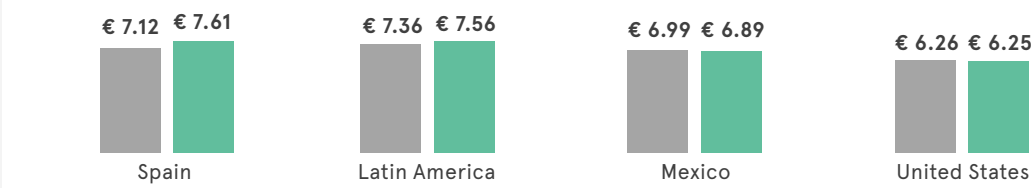
The best-selling ebooks from Latin American publishers in 2025 were priced between **5 and 12.99 euros** > **56.57%** of sales fell within this range, 6.24 percentage points less than in 2024, when it stood at 62.81%.

- Prices set by Latin American publishers show **great stability**: The proportion of titles priced between 15 and 20.99 euros declined only slightly (**3%**), a figure similar to that of books priced above 20 euros.

2.7. Evolution of the Average Price of Ebooks

The average price of ebooks in 2025 was **7.37 euros**.

- This is 24 cents less (**-3.15%**) than in 2024, when it stood at 7.61 euros.
- Ebooks maintain a **price barrier that is clearly lower than that of printed books**: GfK determined that the average price of a paperback book in 2025 was 16.25 euros, 3.6% higher than in 2024 (15.69 euros).



- The average price of ebooks published in the **United States and Mexico** has been driven down by currency volatility. In Spain and Latin America, prices have seen moderate increases of 6.88% and 2.72%, respectively.

2.8. Best-Selling Genres in Each Territory

Spain

Genre	2024	2025	Trend
Fiction	**76%**	**77%**	**+1%**
General Fiction	36%	36%	=
Children's and Young Adult	8%	9%	+1%
Romance	11%	10%	-1%
Science fiction	6%	5%	-1%
Thriller	15%	17%	+2%
Nonfiction	**24%**	**23%**	**-1%**
Practical guide	10%	9%	-1%
General Nonfiction	14%	14%	=

Fiction reinforces its dominance in the Spanish market and has been increasing its share for two years: from 74% in 2023 and 76% in 2024, it reaches **77%** in 2025.

The genre with the largest increase in revenue in 2025 was:

- **Thriller** > from 15% to **17%** of the total.
- The popularity of certain platforms and **subscription** plans favors specific genres such as thriller and crime novels.

In contrast, **romance** literature declines by 1% and **science fiction** drops by 1%.

In **nonfiction**:

- Practical books saw a 1 percentage point drop in revenue, while general nonfiction maintained its 14% share of the total.

Mexico

Genre	2024	2025	Trend
Fiction	**51%**	**52%**	**+1%**
General Fiction	28%	29%	+1%
Children's and Young Adult	5%	7%	+2%
Romance	8%	7%	-1%
Science fiction	3%	2%	-1%
Thriller	7%	7%	=
Nonfiction	**49%**	**48%**	**-1%**
Practical guide	23%	22%	-1%
General Nonfiction	26%	26%	=

The Mexican market maintains its characteristic **balance**: **fiction** (52%) and **nonfiction** (48%), with **general nonfiction** accounting for 26% of total sales.

The **best-selling and most-read genres** are:

- general fiction
- nonfiction
- practical guide.

Changes compared to 2024 are **minimal**:

- General fiction is up 1% and children's and young adult literature is up 2%.
- Romance, science fiction, and practical guides are down 1%.
- Thriller and general nonfiction remain stable.

Latin America

Genre	2024	2025	Trend
Fiction	**47%**	**45%**	**-2%**
General Fiction	25%	24%	-1%
Children`s and Young Adult	5%	6%	+1%
Romance	7%	6%	-1%
Science fiction	3%	2%	-1%
Thriller	7%	7%	=
Nonfiction	**53%**	**55%**	**+2%**
Practical guide	27%	26%	-1%
General Nonfiction	26%	29%	+3%

In Latin America, **nonfiction** continues to grow, rising from 53% in 2024 to **55%** in 2025. **Fiction** declines to **45%**, with children's and young adult literature as the only genre on the rise.

The **best-selling and most-read genres** are:

- nonfiction
- practical guide
- general fiction.

The **changes in market share** can be explained as follows:

- General nonfiction (+3%) and children's and young adult literature (+1%) are up.
- General fiction (-1%), romance (-1%), science fiction (-1%), and practical books (-1%) are down.
- Thriller remains stable.

United States

Genre	2024	2025	Trend
Fiction	**55%**	**59%**	**+4%**
General Fiction	30%	29%	-1%
Children's and Young Adult	5%	7%	+2%
Romance	7%	6%	-1%
Science fiction	4%	5%	+1%
Thriller	9%	12%	+3%
Nonfiction	**45%**	**41%**	**-4%**
Practical guide	19%	18%	-1%
General Nonfiction	26%	23%	-3%

Fiction also dominates in the United States, accounting for **59%** of total revenue.

The **best-selling and most-read genres** are:

- general fiction
- nonfiction
- practical guide.

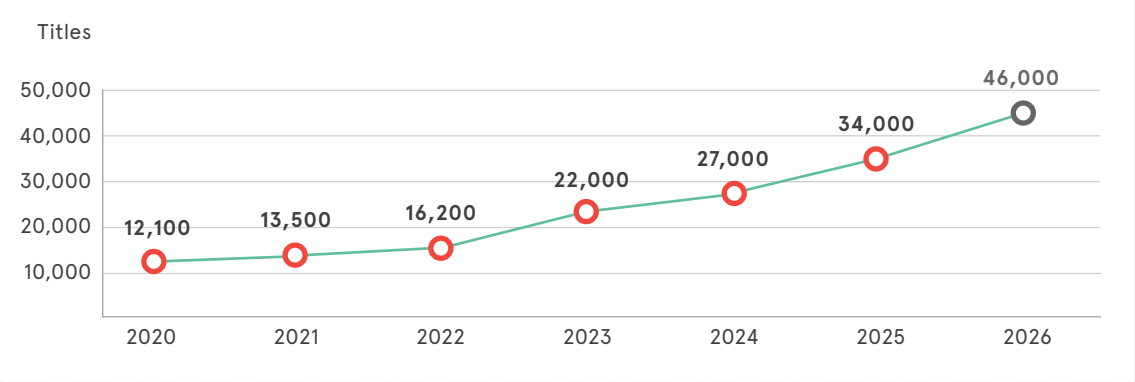
Fiction is driving the sector's **growth**:

- Thriller (+3%), children's and young adult literature (+2%), and science fiction (+1%) are on the rise.
- Nonfiction (-3%), general fiction (-1%), and romance (-1%) are down.

Bookwire

3. Evolution of Audiobook Sales in 2025

3.1. Evolution of the Spanish-Language Audiobook Catalog



At Bookwire, we estimate that by 2026, the catalog of Spanish-language audiobooks will reach **46,000 available titles**.

3.2. Analysis of Audiobook Sales in Spanish-Language Markets

The audiobook market grew by **11.5%** in revenue in 2025.

- However, this figure should be interpreted with caution: The slowdown compared to 2024 (+37.5%) is occurring earlier than expected, with the Spanish-language market still far from the consumption levels of countries such as Germany or Northern Europe. In a market dominated by a single platform and a business

model centered on unlimited subscription plans, growth depends largely on attracting new listeners. If that acquisition slows down, the market tends to stabilize even if current users consume more. All in all, the audiobook remains the most dynamic format: Its growth is more than triple that of the ebook (+1.5%) and far exceeds that of the print book (+3.8%, according to NielsenIQ Bookdata).

- The Spanish-speaking market is eagerly awaiting the arrival of Spotify with its limited-subscription ABP model, which in markets such as France and Germany has proven to be a driving force that contributes significantly to the overall growth of audiobook consumption.

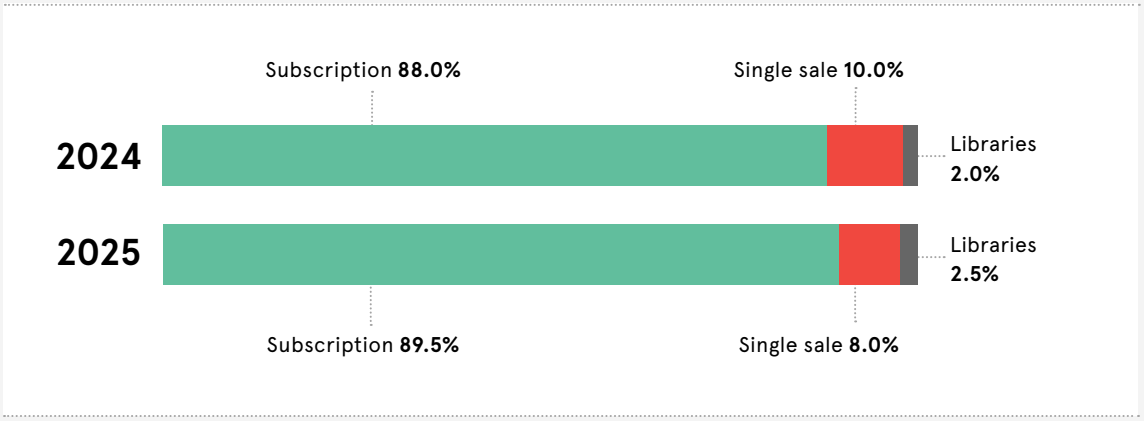
- In Latin America, growth has been driven largely by the Skeelo platform, a channel that offers ebooks and audiobooks as a complementary service for customers of other companies, primarily telecommunications providers.

Region	2024	2025	Trends
Spain	53.0%	54.0%	+1.0%
Latin America	6.5%	2.0%	-4.5%
Mexico	8.4%	18.0%	+9.6%
United States	25.1%	20.0%	-5.1%
Rest of the world	7.0%	6.0%	-1.0%

- **Mexico** saw the largest increase in market share, driven by the expansion of **Skeelo** in the country, a platform that prioritizes audiobooks over other formats.

- **Spain** increases its share by **1%**, while the **United States**, **Latin America**, and the rest of the world see their shares decline.

3.3. Breakdown of the Audiobook Market by Business Model



- **Subscriptions** strengthen their **lead**, reaching an 89.50% market share. Audiobook listeners prefer to pay for a subscription to access titles, as opposed to **purchasing individual** titles, which **has declined by 2 percentage points.**
- **Libraries increased** their share by half a percentage point, reaching 2.50%.

3.4. Best-Selling Genres in Each Region

Genre	Spain	Latin America	Mexico	United States
Fiction	**77%**	**47%**	**54%**	**57%**
Science fiction	5%	3%	2%	4%
General fiction	34%	24%	27%	31%
Children's and Young Adult	10%	5%	9%	6%
Romance	13%	7%	8%	7%
Thriller	12%	8%	8%	9%
Nonfiction	**23%**	**53%**	**46%**	**43%**
Practical book	21%	25%	30%	20%
General nonfiction	12%	28%	16%	23%

4. Articles

4.1. Is it Possible to Use Ethical AI in Today's Audiobook Production?

Juliana Rueda, Founder of Miut and MiVoz, Specialist in audiobook production and AI-driven audio innovation

The concept of ethical AI has been circulating in the publishing industry since the rise of artificial intelligence in 2022. It is presented as a benchmark, almost like a promised land to which publishers should aspire. But what does it really mean in the practice of audiobook production? And is it truly achievable?

In early 2024, a publisher presented me with a very specific dilemma. They had a backlist of nonfiction titles they wanted to produce as audiobooks. The problem was the budget: They didn't have sufficient resources to undertake a production with traditional human narration and were exploring AI-based solutions. However, the options they found raised doubts. Some offered results of questionable quality; others raised ethical concerns regarding the origin of the voices used or the conditions under which the systems had been trained.

As the founder of Miut, an audiobook production company for the Spanish-speaking market with over a decade of experience, they asked me if I knew of a reliable alternative. I didn't. That question led me to investigate the AI narration market more thoroughly.

“Publishers needed economically sustainable models for certain segments of their catalog, and many narrators wanted to participate in the conversation about how to integrate this technology without losing control over their professional identity.”

What I found was an immature and alarming landscape. There were some alternatives where the origin of the voice was not transparent or where voices had been used without explicit consent. In others, compensation for narrators was unclear or insufficient. Alongside this supply, a growing demand was evident: Publishers needed economically sustainable models for certain segments of their catalog, and many narrators wanted to participate in the conversation about how to integrate this technology without losing control over their professional identity.

In that context, I created MiVoz, an AI-based audiobook production company whose production model relies on the use of Authorized Voice Replicas (AVR) from actors already established in the Spanish-language audiobook market. The intention was not to replace human narration, but to explore an intermediate and complementary approach that combined three principles: explicit consent, traceability, and quality standards comparable to those of traditional production.

AVRs are based on samples recorded by the narrator themselves, with specific contractual authorization to generate a digital replica of their voice. Unlike generic synthetic voices created from large anonymous databases, this model allows for the clear identification of the voice’s origin and the transparent establishment of previously agreed-upon terms of use and compensation.

During the technical testing process, it became clear that licensed voice actors offered superior naturalness and interpretive consistency compared to many standard synthetic voice solutions. However, technology alone does not guarantee a satisfactory result. Pre-production, editing, quality control, and human supervision remain essential elements for maintaining the standard that listeners associate with audiobooks, positioning them as a high-quality cultural product.

"Pre-production, editing, quality control, and human oversight remain fundamental elements for maintaining the standard that listeners associate with audiobooks."

Implementing this model has been a learning process. Not all initial decisions were perfect, and it has been necessary to adjust procedures, contracts, and workflows. Constant dialogue with narrators and other industry professionals proved key to defining a framework that balances innovation and protection.

But even with these precautions, one might ask whether we can claim to have achieved "ethical AI." The answer is likely not definitive. More than a static state, ethics is an ongoing process of review. Even if a specific model establishes clear conditions for consent and compensation, it remains essential to examine the technological foundations upon which it is built. What data are the systems trained on? What transparency do technology providers offer? What audit mechanisms exist?

In this regard, industry initiatives such as the labeling guidelines for AI-narrated audiobooks launched in 2024 by professional associations in the United Kingdom represent an important step. The proper identification of AI-generated content not only contributes to transparency but also promotes consumer education and strengthens trust in the product.

Available data underscores the relevance of this debate. In a recent survey conducted by Audible among European listeners, 80% said they choose an audiobook based on the narrator, and 90% perceived the audiobook as "premium" content. These figures reflect the extent to which the voice is not an incidental element, but central to the listening experience.

Precisely for this reason, the AI models that are developed must take this reality into account: It is not merely a matter of generating audio, but of preserving the identity and interpretive quality that the public already recognizes and values. In this sense, alternatives based on authorized replicas of established actors may better align with listener expectations than generic solutions disconnected from the professional market.

If the industry opts for a race toward extreme cost-cutting, the risk is eroding that perception of value. Technology can facilitate the expansion of the catalog and reaching new audiences, but only if a clear commitment to quality and transparency is maintained.

The integration of AI into audiobook production is not a question of "what if," but of "how". Denying it does not seem realistic; adopting it without criteria doesn't either. The current moment offers a limited opportunity to define standards that protect narrators, provide security to publishers, and maintain listeners' trust.

"The integration of AI into audiobook production is not a question of 'if,' but of 'how.' Denying it does not seem realistic; adopting it without criteria doesn't either."

Perhaps the more appropriate question is not whether AI can be ethical, but under what conditions we are willing to consider it as such. The answer will depend on the industry's ability to establish clear frameworks, hold technology providers accountable, and avoid opaque or improvised solutions.

The future of the audiobook will remain deeply tied to the voice. The question is how we decide to integrate these new tools into that ecosystem. The decisions we make now will help define not only business models but also the cultural perception of the format in the coming years.

At MiVoz, we believe that this transformation can and must be built on consent, quality, and transparency. It is not a matter of our AVRs replacing human narration—quite the contrary—it's a question of integrating them responsibly into the audiobook ecosystem. Nor does it make sense to ignore current technology: it is here to stay, and with the decisions we make now, we will have the opportunity to shape the industry we want to build in the future.

4.2. AI in Audio: Existential Threat, or the Next Growth Engine?

Eric Bartoletti, Head of Business Development at Bookwire

Audio continues to be one of the key growth drivers in our industry. It attracts new audiences to books, enables publishers to extract greater value from their content, and continues to deliver double-digit annual growth in many markets worldwide.

But with AI beginning to shape many areas of book publishing, will it ultimately benefit audiobook growth, or undermine the opportunity just as it is gaining momentum?

The greatest fear among many stakeholders in audiobook publishing is that human narrators will be replaced by artificial voices. While this fear is understandable, we do not expect this to happen any time soon. Even providers of AI-based narration acknowledge that editing long-form audio remains time-intensive, particularly for fiction, where emotional nuance and tonal consistency are critical. As a result, while AI narration is significantly cheaper at a technical level, the time required to meet consumer expectations often offsets much of the cost advantage.

Replacing human narrators is therefore unlikely to be the right approach. But supporting human narrators with AI is! We do see more and more AI-supported recording and editing software being used, making the production process more efficient, and the recording experience for professional narrators more convenient. As a result, production costs can in many cases be lowered, and production times reduced. This in turn allows publishers to bring a broader share of their catalogue into audio, including titles that were previously not commercially viable. It also enables publishers to leverage one of the most powerful drivers of audiobook consumption: simultaneous multi-format release!

Marketing budgets are under pressure, and despite audio's growth, most spend still supports print. If the audiobook version launches months after print, the marketing window has already closed. Audio-first consumers won't wait. If it's not available at launch, the opportunity is lost. Releasing all formats simultaneously concentrates marketing impact, captures demand at its peak, and maximises revenue across print, ebook and audio.

Historically, simultaneous release has been challenging to achieve, as audiobook production could only begin once the manuscript was finalised. AI-enabled production tools now allow publishers to accelerate this process, enabling coordinated release of print, ebook and audiobook formats. Beyond production, AI is also improving audiobook discoverability. Audiobook marketing tools like Fabely use audiobook-specific semantic search and AI-based personalised recommedations to increase visibility for audiobooks which complement targeted marketing strategies.

Despite these advances, audiobook production still requires investment and operational effort. As a result, the gap between available audiobooks and ebooks continues to widen. Driven by self-publishing and AI-assisted writing, the number of ebooks is expanding at an unprecedented pace. How can this gap be closed?

In March 2026, Bookwire and ElevenLabs entered into a partnership, inviting publishers to distribute both ebooks and audiobooks to consumers via the ElevenReader app. ElevenLabs' mission is to make every book accessible in audio globally, particularly for audiences who are not keen on reading or who previously lacked access to audiobooks. Using advanced AI-powered read-aloud technology, ElevenReader makes ebooks accessible in audio where no audiobook version exists and where one would likely never have been produced. This significantly expands the addressable audience for publishers' catalogues, particularly for backlist titles. While AI narration does not yet match the quality of human performance, it is certainly more valuable than offering no audio option at all.

At the same time, AI providers are continuously improving their models, which brings us to AI licensing. Although still an emerging business model with evolving structures, demand from both established and emerging AI companies for high-quality, human-created book content remains strong. In negotiating global AI licensing agreements, Bookwire applies clear principles to ensure publishers receive fair compensation and robust guardrails against unauthorised use, reproduction or distribution. Increasingly, AI companies are seeking long-term partnerships that provide legal certainty, high-quality content from trusted sources, and well-structured metadata across diverse catalogues. We believe AI licensing offers publishers an important opportunity to accelerate the return on their audiobook investments, thereby reducing risk, and sustainably expanding market share.

In summary, the introduction of AI into the audio space creates significantly more opportunities than risks for publishers. When applied effectively, AI enables publishers to reach wider audiences in their preferred formats, creating additional value for authors, listeners and themselves. Bookwire's mission is to support publishers in capturing this opportunity. The coming years will reward those who view AI not as a shortcut, but as a foundation for building a more sustainable, inclusive and commercially resilient audiobook ecosystem.

4.3. From Search to Context: How Community-Powered Platforms Like Fabely Unlock the Power of Generative Engine Optimization (GEO)

Why Human-Curated Content is Essential to Provide Chatbots with the Right Context

Carsten Lambrecht, Senior PM Innovations & AI at Bookwire

The Shift from SEO to GEO

Over the past decade, digital discovery has transformed from simple search engine optimization (SEO) toward a new frontier: Generative Engine Optimization (GEO). While SEO focused on making content discoverable for search engines, GEO optimizes content for AI-powered chatbots and conversational platforms. The goal is no longer just clicks, but contextually relevant answers that guide users to the right products. For audiobooks, this shift opens a major opportunity: the right community-generated content can help AI systems recommend titles with trust, nuance, and real human insight.

What is GEO?

GEO, or Generative Engine Optimization, extends the principles of SEO by going beyond keywords. While SEO optimizes for factual search queries—think "audiobook" or "Cozy Crime"—GEO focuses on context. It prepares content to answer nuanced questions from users in conversational formats. For example:

"Can you recommend a good audiobook for my trip to the French Atlantic coast?"

A traditional SEO approach cannot fully answer this. GEO, however, considers multiple layers of context: the user's interests (topics and/or

genres), location, travel time, preferred narrators, and even listening habits. It aims to deliver a recommendation that feels personal and trustworthy, not generic.

Why GEO is Critical Today

Chatbots are becoming smarter—and users lazier. Instead of crafting precise queries, they type brief, context-light questions expecting detailed, accurate answers. Here, GEO diverges from SEO: keywords and metadata alone are insufficient. What matters is layered, context-rich content that can be parsed by AI to infer intent.

Quality and trust remain essential. For SEO, Google's E-E-A-T framework (Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, Trustworthiness) guides content evaluation. GEO inherits these principles but demands additional depth: content must provide situational relevance and nuanced recommendations, not just factual accuracy. Content must be inherently citable. This shift from SEO to GEO therefore marks a move away from pure link building toward what can be described as "citation building".

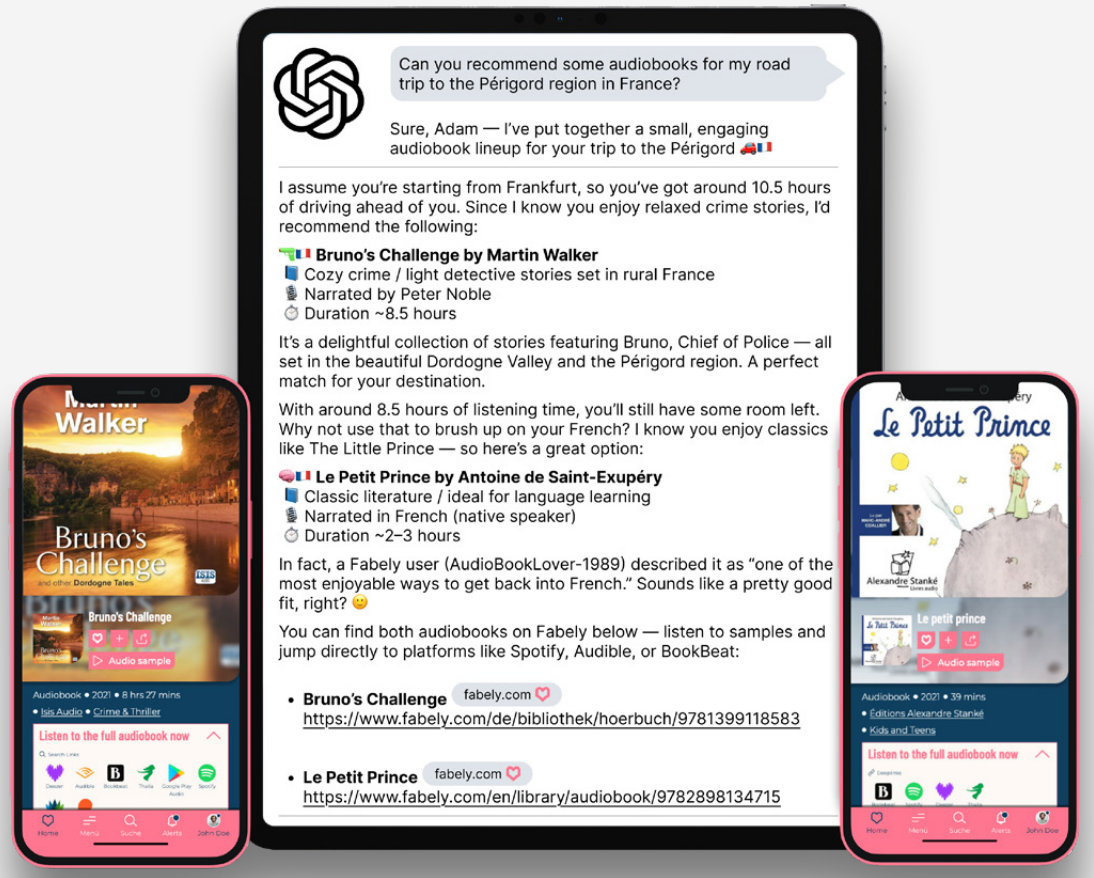
Lessons from Human Curation: Fabely as a GEO Case Study

The human touch is more critical than ever. In our earlier research on audiobook discovery, we observed that users prefer curated, contextualized recommendations. Viral trends work well for music, but not so much for audiobooks. Listeners invest time, attention, and emotional energy, so recommendations must feel trustworthy.
Fabely applies this principle digitally. Users create lists, explain why titles match certain moods or situations, and share insights. This human-generated content is rich in context—exactly what GEO needs to deliver precise answers in conversational AI environments.

The Renaissance of User-Generated Content

For GEO, the quantity and quality of user-generated content (UGC) become pivotal. The more contextualized, trustworthy, and personally curated recommendations a platform collects, the better AI can answer complex, intent-driven queries.

On Fabely, users create themed lists for specific contexts: learning a language (e.g., The Little Prince for Spanish learners), traveling in Spain or France, or engaging with social topics. This content helps chatbots suggest titles aligned with nuanced user intentions—far beyond generic keyword matches.



How Fabely Enables GEO Optimization

Fabely's open community model, paired with gamification, encourages users to engage deeply with content. Listeners become fans, fans become contributors, and contributors enrich the platform with high-quality context. Features like following other users' lists and push notifications keep content alive and continuously updated.

From a GEO perspective, this creates a feedback loop: richer user-generated content improves AI understanding, which in turn drives better recommendations back to users, encouraging more contributions. Over time, Fabely becomes both a source of trustful recommendations and a data-rich context engine for chatbots.

Looking Ahead: Agentic AI and Audiobook Discovery

Some may wonder: if chatbots can eventually sell and recommend products directly, will platforms like Fabely become obsolete? Not for emotional products like books and audiobooks. Discovering and selecting these titles requires context and narrative understanding, not just transactional accuracy.

The descriptive, curated content generated by communities remains vital. It ensures AI can provide thoughtful, situation-aware recommendations. Moreover, users discovering titles through a chat interface may then visit platforms like Fabely to explore lists, interact with communities, and generate new contextual content—creating a self-reinforcing cycle that benefits both humans and AI.

Technical Considerations for GEO

Delivering content for GEO requires structured, accessible formats that AI can interpret. Metadata alone is insufficient; natural-language context is key. Fabely has already implemented early use cases, integrating structured lists, reviews, and contextual annotations. Analytics show repeated visits originating from chatbots, validating the GEO potential of community-driven curation.

Conclusion: Context is King — and Publishers Should Shape It

The transition from SEO to GEO marks a paradigm shift. Success is no longer just about discoverability—it's about delivering contextually rich, human-validated answers that AI can leverage. Community-driven platforms like Fabely provide exactly that: trustworthy, situational, and engaging content that makes chatbot recommendations meaningful.

For audiobooks, the future of discovery is not driven by algorithms alone, but by the combination of technology and human curation. Users are not looking for more content—they are looking for the right content, in the right moment, with the right context.

For publishers, this creates a clear opportunity: don’t just optimize metadata—actively shape context. Encourage authors, narrators, and communities to contribute perspectives, create lists, and share recommendations. By participating in platforms like Fabely, publishers can ensure their titles are not only discoverable, but also understandable for the next generation of AI-driven discovery.