

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines a 12 month marketing strategy for Bloomsbury Publishing to utilise the success of it's author Sarah J Maas with a romantasy novella spin-off ebook and audiobook from the 'A Court of Thorns and Roses (ACOTAR)' series. The strategy integrates digital innovation, immersive storytelling and audience engagement to capitalise on the growing popularity of the romantasy genre and the influence of BookTok trend. By leveraging the RACE framework (Reach, Act, Convert, Engage), the campaign aims to enhance Bloomsbury's position as an industry leader in digital-first publishing.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

The publishing industry's growth is projected to reach £1.5 billion by 2025, following a steady annual increase of 1.4% in 2024 and a predicted 0.9% increase thereafter (Reynolds, 2024).

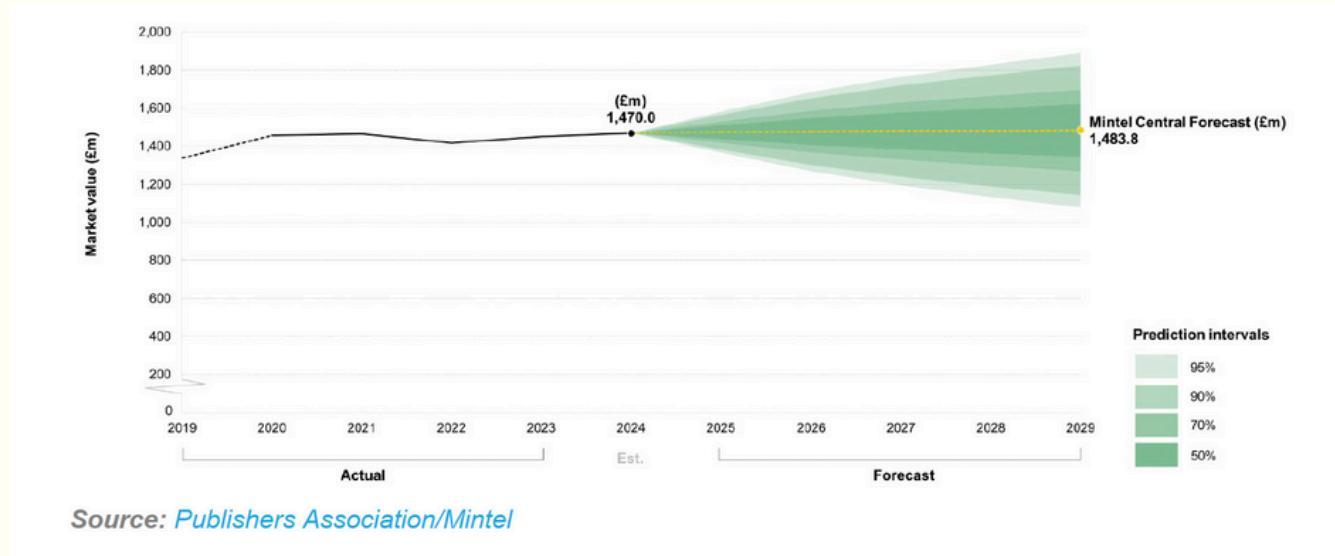


Figure1: Current growth and predicted growth of publishing market, Reynolds, 2024)

A pivotal driver of the current growth is the rise of 'BookTok', a social media phenomenon that has transformed the publishing landscape. This trend has reignited interest in long-form fantasy series and introduced new genres, such as "romantasy" (Reynolds, 2024). From this trend alone, sales of science fiction and fantasy books in the UK have risen by an impressive 41.3% between 2023 and 2024, equalling £724.1 million (Creamer, 2025).

As one of the first publishers to embrace TikTok, Bloomsbury capitalised on this trend by coining the term "romantasy" and positioning itself as an industry innovator (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2024, p. 23). This strategy has contributed to Bloomsbury achieving its highest-ever revenue and profit in 2024, with revenues rising by 30% and consumer revenue growing by 49%, driven by demand for authors in the romantasy genre like Sarah J. Maas (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2024, p. 12).

SITUATION ANALYSIS

A significant focus on the future of growth is the increasing role of digital formats, such as e-books and audiobooks. According to the Books, E-Books and Audiobooks Mintel report (2024), *"Rising prices have slowed sales of hardbacks, while the lower cost and accessibility of digital formats have led to a surge in e-book and audiobook sales."* Publishers are also focusing on sustainability. *"Our ideas and stories are limitless, but the planet's resources are not"* (Reynolds, 2024). Materials, printing processes, recycled resources and transportation could be a focus, which supports the prediction and recommendation to focus on digital (Reynolds, 2024).

Advances in AI technology present a unique opportunity to support these efforts by improving accessibility and reducing production costs, particularly for audiobooks. The Books, E-Books and Audiobooks Mintel report (2024) notes that *"Readers hope growing efficiency will lead to reduced prices, boosting access to books—especially for children and in deprived areas where library closures have impacted availability. AI voiceovers, for instance, could significantly reduce audiobook costs."*

OPPORTUNITY

Sarah J. Maas has become a standout figure in the publishing world and a driving force behind the booming 'romantasy' genre. With over 38 million books sold globally and an impressive 161% year-on-year sales growth, Maas is more than just an international bestseller. Her latest release, *Crescent City: House of Flame and Shadow*, debuted as a global No.1 bestseller in January 2024 (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2024, p. 12; Statista, 2024).

To build on her incredible success and engage her dedicated fan base, this marketing report proposes an innovative new project for Bloomsbury: a novella spin-off from the bestseller *A Court of Thorns and Roses* series, designed exclusively for digital ebook and audiobook formats. This initiative introduces an AI-driven, customisable reading experience, allowing fans to personalise key elements of the story—such as the names, traits, and descriptions of lead characters—while still immersing themselves in Maas' signature storytelling.

UNIQUE SELLING POINT

By combining the creativity of Maas' writing with cutting-edge AI technology, this interactive and tailored approach taps into the growing demand for immersive, personalised content. (Mintel, 2025) It offers readers the chance to shape their own journey within a beloved fantasy world, further solidifying Bloomsbury's position as a leader in digital publishing and innovation, as this would be the first book published of this kind.

ALIGN WITH BUSINESS STRATEGY

This initiative aligns seamlessly with Bloomsbury's growth strategy, which emphasises investing in high-value intellectual property, expanding digital platforms, and delivering unique, high-quality content across its Consumer Division. By acquiring exceptional works from established and emerging authors, Bloomsbury is building a strong and diversified publishing pipeline. Simultaneously, the company is driving growth in digital publishing by enhancing its most popular resources, launching innovative platforms, and capitalising on the surging audiobook market. (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2024, p. 17)

Our strategy

Our overall growth strategy and long-term focus remains to invest in high value intellectual property and digital channels, publish works of excellence and originality, and grow our diversified portfolio of content and services across our Consumer and Non-Consumer Divisions to build quality revenues and increase earnings. Bloomsbury is committed to playing its part in shaping a more sustainable, equitable and inclusive world, and this commitment informs our strategic priorities, as described on pages 16 and 17.

Figure2: LongTerm Strategy Goals, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2024, p. 17

We aim to achieve this by investing in:

01

Our colleagues

We are committed to ongoing investment in our colleagues and our working environment, including through the provision of development and training opportunities, the implementation of flexible and balanced working, and the promotion of a diverse, inclusive and ethical culture in order to enable individual and collective success and attract new talent.

02

Content

We continue to invest in new content by acquiring works of originality and excellence from established and emerging authors and partners across a range of genres and from an array of voices in order to enhance our diversified portfolio of intellectual property and build a strong publishing pipeline.

03

Acquisitions

We continue to pursue acquisitions which will support our growth strategy, accelerate our digital offerings, strengthen existing areas of publishing, and enable us to expand into new areas. Since Bloomsbury's inception, we have made 33 acquisitions of publishers and imprints.

04

Digital

We are focused on delivering growth by investing in the development of our existing and most successful digital resource products and accelerating the launch of new products. We continue to invest in audio publishing as this market continues to grow.

Figure3: LongTerm Strategy Goals, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2024, p. 17

TARGET MARKET

DEMOGRAPHICS

AGE

Primarily 18-35 years old, largely comprising late Gen Z and Millennials, who form the dominant demographic of romantasy readers and active BookTok users (Reynolds, 2024; Creamer, 2024).

Audience insights ●

Age range ●

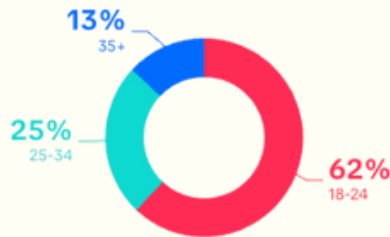


Figure4: (#booktok Trending Hashtag on TikTok, see #booktok analytics, 2025)

GENDER

Predominantly female. Women are central consumers of romantasy, particularly books featuring bold heroines and romance-driven narratives (Reynolds, 2024; Creamer, 2024).

INCOME LEVEL

Middle- to high-income earners who are willing to invest in premium collector editions and personalised digital books (Statista, 2024)

ADDITIONAL BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS

Active reader (Read more the one book in 12 months)

Frequent social media user

Enjoy book-related social media, especially TikTok's #BookTok

Comfortable consuming digital content and integrating it into their daily lives using eReaders or audiobook platforms (Statista Consumer Insights, 2024).

A growing curiosity about AI-written fiction (Reynolds, 2024)

Has a Goodreads account

A Kindle Unlimited/Audible subscriber (Statista, 2024)

Frequent participants in online discussions about books on social platforms such as TikTok, Goodreads, and Instagram. (Weikle, 2024)

Seek strong female protagonists as well as inclusive and diverse narratives

Value escapism through imaginative, emotionally engaging worlds with high-stakes plots (Mintel, 2024).

Enjoys romance tropes (Weikle, 2024)

PEN PORTRAIT



EMMA

Meet Emma, a 28-year-old marketing professional with a passion for escapism through romantasy novels. As a late Millennial, she's part of the thriving BookTok community, where she loves sharing and discovering new reads. Emma is an avid reader, finishing multiple books a year, and she's always on the hunt for bold heroines, romance-driven plots, and diverse narratives that immerse her in imaginative, high-stakes worlds.

Emma spends her evenings scrolling TikTok, Goodreads, and Instagram for book recommendations, and she's a subscriber to Kindle Unlimited and Audible to keep her library stocked. She values premium collector editions and isn't afraid to splurge on personalized digital books. Tech-savvy and digital-first, she integrates eReaders and audiobooks into her busy life, often consuming content on the go.

Emma is curious about AI-written fiction and actively engages in online discussions about books. She enjoys romance tropes and seeks stories with strong female protagonists. For Emma, reading is more than a hobby—it's an emotional escape and a way to connect with like-minded readers across the globe.

STRENGTHS

- Bloomsbury achieved record revenue and profit in its 37-year history, with a 30% revenue surge in 2024 (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc , 2024).
- Consumer revenue grew 49%, fueled by strong demand for authors like Sarah J. Maas, whose sales rose 161% year-on-year, with over 38 million books sold globally (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc , 2024; Statista, 2024).
- Bloomsbury saw strong growth in digital resources, which generated £27 million in sales, and operates across general and academic publishing, diversifying across formats, regions, and subjects to reduce reliance on any single market (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc , 2024)
- Platforms like BookTok have boosted sales significantly for authors like Sarah J. Maas (Statista, 2024; Roeloffs, 2024).
- The company maintains strong liquidity with £65.8 million in net cash and a £20 million revolving credit facility (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc , 2024)
- Digital sales grew by 29%, driven by ebook revenue growth of 47%, audio revenue growth of 50%. (Statista, 2024)

WEAKNESSES

- Non-consumer sales dropped 4%, reflecting challenges in academic and professional publishing (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc , 2024).
- Rising Costs: Higher production and distribution costs, especially for paper and energy, could affect profit margins (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc , 2024).
- Accruals rose 52%, and trade liabilities increased 36%, signaling higher operational costs (Bloomsbury, 2024a).
- Advertising Challenges: Traditional ads are less effective, and forced BookTok trends risk alienating audiences (Statista, 2024).
- Digital sales grew 29%, with ebook revenue up 47%, audio up 50%, and BDR up 2%. Print sales rose 32%, driven by Consumer sales. (Reynolds, 2024; Statista, 2024; Various sources (Frontlist), 2024)



OPPORTUNITIES

- Digital revenue grew 5% year-on-year, reaching £3.2 billion in the UK (Statista, 2024).
- Audiobook downloads in the UK increased by 24%, with revenue more than doubling since 2019 (Statista, 2024).
- Leveraging Social Media: Platforms like BookTok are highly effective in promoting authors, especially in fantasy and romance (Statista, 2024).
- There's potential to engage multi-channel readers by bundling print books with digital downloads (Statista, 2024).
- Bloomsbury's independent status allows it to be more agile and innovative than the larger "Big 5" publishers. It focuses on niche markets, emerging authors, and strong talent relationships often overlooked by bigger competitors. Its academic publishing and digital-first strategies offer unique growth opportunities.
- Bloomsbury's emphasis on sustainable publishing and digital-first strategies aligns with global trends and consumer preferences (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc , 2024).

THREATS

- Rising living costs could affect consumer spending on non-essential books (Statista, 2024).
- The second-hand market and discounters like Amazon are growing, potentially reducing new book sales (Statista, 2024).
- Uncertainty and distrust around AI remain a challenge (Intel, 2025; Birch, 2025).
- Ongoing supply chain delays and inflation could disrupt operations and raise costs (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc , 2024).
- Generative AI poses risks to intellectual property and the publishing value chain (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc , 2024).
- "Big 5" UK publishers have greater resources, global reach, and marketing budgets
- While digital continues to grow, print still dominates, especially among Gen Z readers who prefer hardbacks (Statista, 2024).
- A survey found 24% of Britons hadn't read a book in three months, hinting at stagnating readership (Statista, 2024)



Global 50 Publisher Ranking

Lucky number seven
(years in a row) for
RELX at the top

	Publishing Group	HQ	=/-	2023 (€m)
1	→ RELX	UK/NL	1.0%	€5,653
2	→ ThomsonReuters	Canada	4.5%	€5,462
3	→ Bertelsmann	Germany	11.6%	€5,408
4	→ Pearson	UK	-7.7%	€4,228
5	→ Wolters Kluwer	NL	-6.6%	€3,849
6	→ Hachette Livre	France	2.2%	€2,809
7	+ Hitotsubashi	Japan	-11.8%	€2,037
8	↑ Springer Nature	Germany	1.7%	€1,853
9	↓ Wiley	US	-0.9%	€1,824
10	↓ HarperCollins	US	-7.7%	€1,787
11	↓ Phoenix Publishing and Media	China	-7.7%	€1,625
12	→ Scholastic	US	6.0%	€1,539
13	→ Holtzbrinck	Germany	2.9%	€1,396
14	↑ Informa	UK	16.9%	€1,381
15	↑ Cengage	US	7.9%	€1,358
16	↑ CUP Press & Assessment	UK	32.7%	€1,152
17	→ China South	China	-4.6%	€1,149
18	↑ Klett	Germany	9.5%	€1,123
19	↓ Kodansha	Japan	-15.3%	€1,101
20	→ Simon & Schuster	US	0.5%	€1,045
21	↑ Oxford University Press	UK	-2.6%	€959
22	↑ Planeta	Spain	18.0%	€950
23	↓ Kadokawa	Japan	-15.4%	€909
24	↑ Sanoma	Finland	16.7%	€795
25	→ Editis SAS	France	-4.8%	€751
26	↑ Bonnier	Sweden	0.5%	€727
27	↑ Média Participations	France	-2.8%	€703
28	↓ China Publishing Group	China (PR)	-7.9%	€674
29	↑ Gruppo editoriale Mauri Spagnol	Italy	4.8%	€672
30	→ Woongjin ThinkBig	Korea	-10.0%	€624
31	↓ Kyowon	Korea	-17.6%	€614
32	↑ Madrigall	France	-1.4%	€613
33	↑ Mondadori	Italy	6.2%	€612
34	↑ Les Editions Lefebvre-Sarrut	France	2.4%	€555
35	↑ Eksmo	Russia	-1.2%	€423
36	↑ Cogna Educação	Brazil	54.5%	€419
37	↑ China Science	China (PR)	-2.6%	€363
38	↑ C H Beck	Germany	7.7%	€350
39	↑ Bloomsbury	UK	10.7%	€304
40	↑ Westermann	Germany	0.0%	€290
41	↑ Cornelsen	Germany	6.0%	€264
42	↑ Editora FTD	Brazil	37.0%	€253
43	↑ Huyghens de Participation	France	8.5%	€231
44	↑ Gakken	Japan	-20.5%	€197
45	↑ WEKA	Germany	-5.8%	€196
46	↑ Thieme	Germany	0.0%	€173
47	↑ Bungeishunju	Japan	0.1%	€159

Key + New ↑ Up → Same ↓ Down.
Source: The 2024 Global 50 Publishing Ranking.
To download the full 2024 Global 50 Publishing Ranking, go to www.wischenbart.com/ranking.

Figure5: (Global 50 Publisher Ranking, Tivnan, 2024)



Penguin
Random
House

- Revenue increased to €4.9 billion in 2024, driven by higher book prices, audiobook growth, and acquisitions like Hay House and Boom! Studios. 11.3% profit. (The Bookseller, 2025)



HarperCollinsPublishers

- Rebounded from a challenging 2023 with a 6% sales growth and 61% rise in EBITDA.
- Digital formats, especially audiobooks, accounted for 23% of consumer revenues. (Williams, 2025)



ENTANGLED
PUBLISHING

- Fourth Wing and Iron Flame sold over 4.5 million copies combined, driven by BookTok and innovative marketing strategies. (Stewart, 2024)



SIMON &
SCHUSTER

- Modest profit growth of 0.5% in 2024, with a focus on backlist titles and digital sales. (Tivnan, T, 2024)



- Achieved 5% sales growth in the first half of 2024, with profits increasing by 74% due to restructuring and integration of Workman Publishing. (Milliot, 2024)

COMPETITION



- Strong performance driven by fantasy fiction, particularly Sarah J. Maas titles, and a 30% growth in revenue.

COMPETITION

- Penguin Random House leads the market with significant revenue and profit growth, driven by strategic acquisitions and a strong audiobook market.
- HarperCollins has rebounded well but still faces challenges in print sales and over-reliance on non-fiction.
- Entangled Publishing has emerged as a major player in romantasy, leveraging BookTok and innovative marketing to achieve record sales.
- Simon & Schuster and Hachette show modest to strong growth, focusing on digital and international markets.
- Bloomsbury continues to excel in the fantasy genre, leveraging the popularity of authors like Sarah J. Maas.

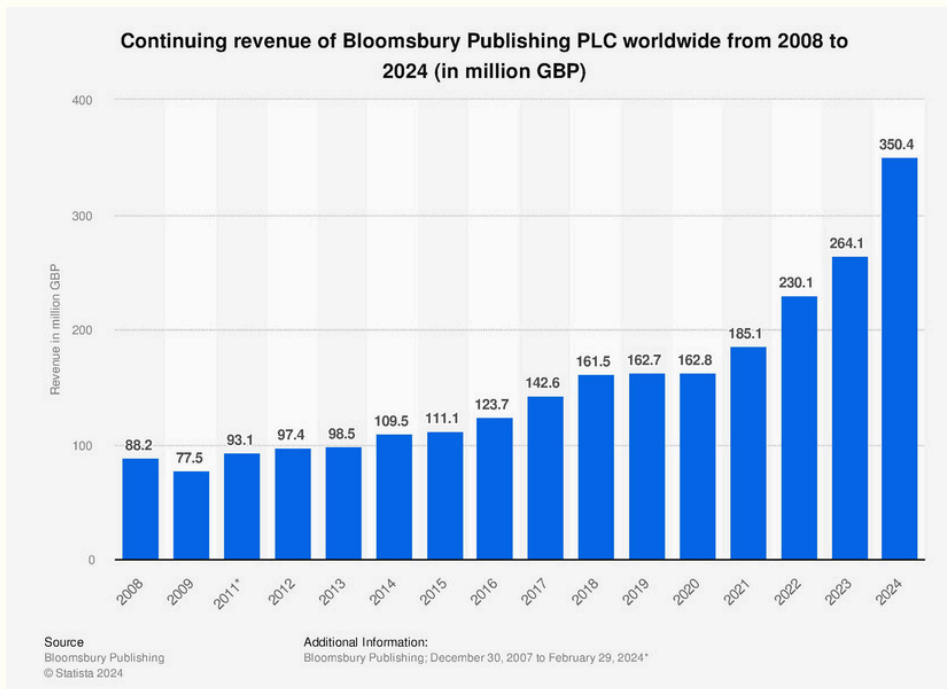


Figure6: (Bloomsbury Revenue up to 2024, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2024)

SMART GOALS

OVERALL AIM

To capitalise on the growing demand for digital formats and the popularity of the 'romantasy' genre, Bloomsbury aims to launch an innovative novella spin-off from the A Court of Thorns and Roses series by Sarah J. Maas. This project will leverage AI technology to create a customisable reading experience, exclusively available in digital e-book and audiobook formats. The initiative aligns with Bloomsbury's strategy to expand its digital offerings, engage new and existing audiences, and drive long-term growth.

SPECIFIC

- Develop and release the novella in digital e-book and audiobook formats, featuring AI-driven personalisation, to attract new and existing audiences.
- Increase digital sales and engagement by leveraging Sarah J. Maas' fan base and the popularity of the 'romantasy' genre.
- Strengthen Bloomsbury's position as a leader in innovative publishing showcasing Bloomsbury's leadership in combining AI technology with creative storytelling.
- Achieve strong pre-order and launch performance.
- Enhance Bloomsbury's brand visibility.

MEASURABLE

- Secure 50,000 pre-orders for the novella by its release in April 2026, supported by a marketing campaign starting in June 2025.
- Achieve a 10% increase in digital sales within 12 months of the novella's release, contributing to Bloomsbury's Consumer Division revenue growth.
- Increase global sales of Sarah J. Maas' books to 40 million copies by the end of the 12-month period, leveraging the novella's success and renewed interest in her back catalogue.
- Increase Bloomsbury's social media engagement by 25% within 12 months, focusing on platforms like TikTok and Instagram to promote the novella and other titles.

ACHIEVABLE

- Utilise Bloomsbury's existing digital infrastructure and partnerships with AI developers to ensure the novella is completed and launched by April 2026.
- Use Bloomsbury's success with BookTok and social media campaigns to attract Sarah J. Maas' fan base and new readers to the novella.
- Plan launch event
- Plan PR events with media and leading industry outlets such as Forbes, The Guardian, Publishers Weekly during and after prelaunch phase

RELEVANT

- Align with Bloomsbury's strategic priorities.
- Support Bloomsbury's focus on high-value intellectual property, digital innovation, and audience engagement, while capitalising on the popularity of Sarah J. Maas and the 'romantasy' genre.
- Position the novella as a groundbreaking project in digital publishing, showcasing Bloomsbury's leadership in combining AI technology with creative storytelling.

TIME

- Launch the novella and marketing campaign within a 12-month timeline.
- Begin the marketing campaign in June 2025, focusing on pre-orders, PR, book launch events, and social media engagement, with the novella release set for April 2026.
- Reach 40 million global sales of Sarah J. Maas' books and achieve a 10% increase in digital sales within 12 months of the novella's release.

STRATEGY

JUNE 2025 - SEPTEMBER 2025 (REACH PHASE)

Objective: Build awareness of the upcoming novella.
Excite Sarah J. Maas' fan base and attract new romantasy readers.
Highlight the innovative AI personalisation feature.

Channel	Action
Social Media	Partner with 50 top influencers to create teaser videos showcasing fan theories, exclusive plot elements, and campaign hashtags like #MYACOTAR, #BloomsburyRomantasy and #ACOTARSpinOff.
PR	Share official press releases in Publishers Weekly, The Guardian, and The Bookseller, introducing the novella and its AI personalisation. Secure interviews with Sarah J. Maas to discuss the novella and her creative process.
Cover Reveal	Unveil the novella's cover on Bloomsbury's website and social media, with Maas sharing an exclusive teaser video. Promote content through influencer reaction videos and social posts.
Interactive Countdown Landing Page	Launch a pre-order landing page featuring an AI personalisation demo where users can explore customisable character elements.

KPI'S

Gain 1 million social media impressions by the end of June.
Generate 50,000 unique visitors to the landing page.
Secure teaser content collaborations with 50 influencers.

STRATEGY

OCTOBER 2025 - JANUARY 2026

Objective: Strengthen audience engagement.

Convert awareness into active interactions through social media and website traffic.

Channel	Action
Pre-Order Drive Campaigns	Announce early pre-order bonuses such as digital SWAG (exclusive wallpapers, character art).
Website Engagement	Enhance engagement on the landing page by promoting the personalisation tool, allowing users to trial different character options. Launch an exclusive behind-the-scenes blog about Sarah J. Maas' writing process. Encourage visitors to subscribe to join the virtual launch party, receive early access and updates.
SWAG	Run TikTok challenges like "Your Favourite Fantasy Romance Tropes" with hints on what the novella's trope could be or themed quizzes about ACOTAR characters, keeping them guessing who the novella will include in the story.
Virtual Teaser Events	Host short virtual Q&A sessions with Maas, allowing fans to discuss her world-building and inspirations for the novella.

KPI'S

Achieve 100,000 new newsletter signups by the end of the phase.

Secure a 30% engagement rate on the interactive landing page.

Generate 30% more user-driven social content compared to previous phases.

STRATEGY

FEBRUARY 2026 - MARCH 2026 (CONVERT PHASE)

Objective: Aggressively push pre-orders.

Transition engaged audiences into confirmed buyers before and during the official launch.

Channel	Action
Pre-Order Campaigns	Offer exclusive bonus chapter for preorders, only limited available and only available on preorder.
Paid Advertising	Run PPC campaigns featuring pre-order links to the novella across Kindle, Goodreads, Google, Kobo, Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook and Audible platforms. Utilise re-targeting ads for visitors who haven't completed a pre-order after visiting the landing page.
Email Campaigns	Send updates, countdown and exclusive offers to both Bloomsbury mailing list and Sarah J Maas' mailing list every two weeks.
Exclusive Early Content Previews	Release the novella's first chapter (with AI personalisation) as a free preview for social followers or newsletter subscribers.
Influencer Partnerships	Distribute advanced copies to BookTok influencers and Goodreads reviewers for early feedback and reaction videos.

KPI'S

Achieve 50,000 pre-orders before the novella release.

Monitor conversion rates for ads, targeting a 15% improvement over past campaigns.

Drive 40% of pre-order sales through digital formats, emphasising AI-personalised novellas and audiobooks.

STRATEGY

APRIL 2026 (CONVERT PHASE)

Objective: Convert momentum into strong initial sales performance.

Maintain campaign momentum leading up to launch.

Build a community of returning fans excited for the release

Channel	Action
Launch-Day Festival	Host a large-scale virtual event featuring Maas discussing iconic moments in the novella and fielding live fan questions. Include themed mini-events, such as fantasy cosplay contests or art showcases. Invite press.
Influencer Launch Support	Amplify BookTok reactions by coordinating real-time posts and livestreams with influencers sharing their thoughts after reading.
Campaign on Social Media Paid Ads	Push paid ads showcasing fan reactions, teaser scenes, and the uniqueness of personalisation features.
Launch Reviews and Testimonials	Share fan and critic reviews extensively on Bloomsbury's platforms to build credibility.
Influencer Partnerships	Distribute advanced copies to BookTok influencers and Goodreads reviewers for early feedback and reaction videos.

KPI'S

Achieve 200,000 total sales within the first month.

Attract 1 million launch-day impressions across TikTok and Instagram.

STRATEGY

MAY 2026 - JUNE 2026 (POST-LAUNCH ENGAGE PHASE)

Objective: Build post-launch loyalty.
Drive additional sales through engagement.

Channel	Action
ACOTAR Digital Collector's Bundle	Release a deluxe digital bundle of A Court of Thorns and Roses (ACOTAR) series, including the new novella, exclusive character backstories, and interactive fan features.
Bookclub	Launch an interactive book club centred on the novella, encouraging detailed discussion among fans on platforms like TikTok and Goodreads.
Series Expansion Tease	Begin hinting at potential extensions to the ACOTAR world, integrating fan discussions and input into the development process.
PR	Share official press releases in Publishers Weekly, The Guardian, and The Bookseller etc about how the launch went and how the AI personalisation was perceived

KPI'S

Achieve a 20% growth in long-term brand engagement metrics such as social followers and newsletter signups.
Sustain a community engagement rate of 25% year-on-year.
Generate £500,000 in additional digital revenues from future ACOTAR ecosystem tie-ins.

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