

Developing a Biblioprescription Framework for Generation Z: Integrating Prescription-Style Visuals and Individual Persona Modules

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ABSTRACT

Digital platforms have altered how young readers discover, evaluate, and purchase books, yet the marketing of many Malay-language titles remains oriented towards conventional descriptive promotion. This conceptual and developmental paper addresses the mismatch between traditional book marketing and the solution-seeking, visually mediated consumption patterns associated with Generation Z in Malaysia. The objective is to develop a Biblioprescription framework that integrates “Prescription-Style” visuals and individual persona modules. Biblioprescription is defined here as a non-clinical book-discovery and marketing approach that presents a book as a clearly signposted resource for a reader’s intellectual, developmental, or emotional need. The framework combines bibliotherapy literature, visual information processing, cognitive load theory, parasocial interaction, consumer culture theory, and the Attention–Interest–Desire–Action (AIDA) model. A four-phase developmental research design is proposed, which are, qualitative needs analysis, framework and stimulus development, a randomised digital A/B test involving Generation Z participants, and integrated framework refinement. The resulting conceptual model links Prescription-Style cover design to attention, solution-oriented information architecture to interest, an authentic individual persona to desire, and friction-reduced e-commerce cues to action. The paper contributes a testable bridge between therapeutic reading concepts and digital book marketing while retaining an explicit boundary between literacy promotion and clinical treatment. It also provides publishers with an operational basis for designing and evaluating more relevant, transparent, and measurable book-marketing interventions.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Consumer Behaviour, Publishing Management

INTRODUCTION

Digital platforms have transformed not only distribution but also product discovery, recommendation, purchasing, and consumer participation. In Malaysia, social-shopping behaviour is significantly associated with platform interactivity, perceived ease of use, and trust (Ahmad et al., 2022), while TikTok’s immersive format, user-generated content, influencer marketing, and integrated commerce functions further shape online purchase intention (Sohid et al., 2024). Within this environment, Generation Z has become strategically important because its members have grown up with social media, platform-based recommendations, short-form video, and immediate access to e-commerce. For publishers, the central problem is therefore no longer limited to producing high-quality titles; it also involves communicating a title’s relevance quickly and credibly within an intensely competitive digital attention environment.

Malaysia reflects these global shifts. The Reading Profile of Malaysians 2022/2023 indicates that Malaysians read for knowledge, motivation, entertainment, emotional relief, and other practical purposes, with digital access becoming increasingly important (National Library of Malaysia, 2025). These purposes suggest

that reading is not experienced merely as a cultural activity; it is also used as a resource for self-improvement, problem solving, identity formation, and emotional regulation. This broader functional understanding of reading creates an opportunity for publishers to reposition books as tools that respond to identifiable reader needs.

Platform-based evidence reinforces the significance of this shift. TikTok's short-form video, personalised content delivery, influencer marketing, and seamless e-commerce integration can shape online purchasing intention by combining entertainment, social interaction, and transaction cues (Sohid et al., 2024). Malaysian social-commerce research further shows that perceived enjoyment, trust, and electronic word-of-mouth significantly influence shopping intention, with trust emerging as the strongest predictor (Wan Nawang et al., 2025). Such evidence does not mean that every reading choice is therapeutic. It does, however, show why publishers need a clearer mechanism for presenting the benefit, intended reader, and use context of a title without reducing its intellectual or literary value.

This paper uses the term Biblioprescription to describe that mechanism. Biblioprescription is conceived as a non-clinical book-discovery and marketing framework in which a title is presented as a carefully matched resource for an identified intellectual, developmental, social, or emotional need. The metaphor of a prescription is operationalised through two coordinated modules. The first is a "Prescription-Style" visual module that displays the title's principal theme, reader need, active ideas, expected benefit, and use cues through a clear visual hierarchy. The second is an individual persona module in which a credible reviewer or presenter interprets the title, explains its relevance, and offers an authentic recommendation. In industry discourse, these elements have been articulated as solution-oriented concepts, strong cover visuals, and the persuasive delivery of an identifiable individual.

The research gap lies in the absence of an integrated and testable framework that connects these product and communication elements across the full consumer journey. Existing work explains therapeutic reading, visual processing, parasocial trust, and purchase behaviour separately. It does not sufficiently specify how a solution-oriented visual identity and an individual digital persona can be co-designed for book marketing and evaluated through observable Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action outcomes. The objective of this paper is therefore to develop a Biblioprescription framework integrating Prescription-Style visuals and individual persona modules. The paper contributes by defining the construct, deriving its components from the literature, specifying a developmental and validation methodology, and discussing its theoretical and practical implications for Malay-language publishing and digital reading culture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The proposed framework draws together five bodies of literature, which are, bibliotherapy and solution-oriented reading, visual information processing, cognitive load, parasocial interaction and digital authenticity, and hierarchical response models in marketing. The integration is necessary because book discovery on digital platforms is simultaneously a cognitive, emotional, social, and transactional process.

From Bibliotherapy to Biblioprescription

The relationship between reading and wellbeing predates contemporary digital marketing. Crothers (1916) introduced the language of bibliotherapy to describe the purposeful use of literature in support of personal wellbeing. Subsequent research has examined how libraries and reading environments may function as therapeutic spaces and facilitate coping, reflection, and social connection (Brewster, 2014). The Malaysian National Health and Morbidity Survey further underscores the importance of addressing adolescent wellbeing through accessible supportive resources (National Institutes of Health Malaysia, 2022). Thus, these sources establish that readers may approach books not merely as entertainment or information containers but also as resources for managing life concerns.

Biblioprescription extends this insight into the domain of book discovery and marketing, but it must not be equated with clinical bibliotherapy. It does not diagnose a medical condition, promise recovery, or replace professional advice. Instead, it structures the way a publisher or reviewer communicates the relevance of a book to a self-identified need. The distinction is important because a prescription metaphor can increase clarity and

memorability while also creating ethical risks if it is used to exaggerate therapeutic outcomes. Accordingly, the framework requires transparent benefit claims, appropriate disclaimers, and careful differentiation between educational self-help and clinical intervention.

This repositioning is consistent with the Malaysian reading profile, in which knowledge acquisition, motivation, and relaxation or therapeutic purposes form important reasons for reading (National Library of Malaysia, 2025). Research on Malaysian youths also shows that reading habits are shaped by attitudes and parental influence and can contribute to broader developmental outcomes (Rasiah et al., 2022). Biblioprescription therefore treats readers' purposes as an organising principle for discovery. Rather than grouping titles only by conventional genre, publishers may also describe them by the problem, aspiration, or life situation to which they are relevant.

Visual Information Processing and Prescription-Style Design

Digital book discovery can be challenging because readers have a limited capacity to process information and must divide their attention among many competing elements on a screen. Miller (1956) highlighted the limits of working-memory capacity, while cognitive load theory explains that poorly organised information can create unnecessary mental effort and reduce understanding (Sweller, 1988). Although these theories were not originally developed for social commerce, they help explain why book covers with too much text, unclear visual hierarchy, or vague benefit statements may be difficult to understand quickly, particularly when viewed on a small mobile screen.

Prescription-Style design responds to this problem through benefit-driven visual organisation. Consistent with working-memory and cognitive-load principles, it uses a limited number of high-salience information elements, consistent typography, controlled colour, and a recognisable hierarchy to help users identify what the book addresses (Miller, 1956; Sweller, 1988). The visual metaphor may include labels such as "For readers who...", "May help with...", "Recommended when...", "Reading dose", or "Expected benefit". These labels are not medical claims; they form an information architecture intended to reduce the distance between a user's need and a book's value proposition.

Research on Malaysian digital commerce similarly highlights the importance of web interactivity, perceived ease of use, and trust in social-shopping behaviour (Ahmad et al., 2022). When exploring cognitive profiles among Malaysian tertiary students, empirical data demonstrates that structured reading habits are strongly associated with memory performance and information retention, though the direct effect on attention-span variation requires separate structural insulation (Ansar & Zainudin, 2025). Rather than relying on sweeping assumptions about universal digital attention spans, these findings underscore the necessity of studying localized cognitive limitations directly. Consequently, the relevant design objective for a Biblioprescription interface is not visual novelty alone but diagnostic clarity, the degree to which a user can quickly understand the book's function, intended audience, and reason for relevance.

Individual Persona, Parasocial Interaction, and Trust

A visually clear proposition may attract attention, but book purchasing also depends on interpretation and trust. Parasocial interaction describes the sense of intimacy that audiences may develop with media personalities despite the relationship being mediated and largely non-reciprocal (Horton & Wohl, 1956). In short-form video and live-stream commerce, this mechanism helps explain why an individual reviewer can make a recommendation feel personally relevant. The presenter becomes an interpretive intermediary between publisher, text, and reader.

The individual persona module builds on these principles by turning abstract audience segments into identifiable social representatives. A persona is defined here as a recurring reader, creator, bookseller, educator, counsellor, or community figure who communicates why a particular title matters to a specific group. Authenticity and trust are central because platform users are sensitive to over-scripted endorsements and undisclosed commercial influence. Malaysian evidence identifies trust and electronic word-of-mouth as significant predictors of social-commerce intention (Wan Nawang et al., 2025), while live-stream research

explains how parasocial relationships can build trust in social-commerce sellers (Yang et al., 2025). The persona module should therefore prioritise demonstrated relevance over celebrity reach.

Research on TikTok illustrates how short-form video, user-generated content, influencer marketing, personalised delivery, and integrated commerce can shape purchase intention (Sohid et al., 2024). However, reach by itself is not equivalent to persuasion. A persona becomes strategically valuable when the audience sees the recommendation as socially and personally meaningful. For publishing, this means matching the persona not only to a title's genre but also to the reader need or life context framed by the prescription-style design.

AIDA as the Integrating Consumer-Journey Structure

The AIDA model organises persuasive communication through the stages of Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action and has been applied to social-media marketing strategy (Hassan et al., 2015). Although the model is linear, it remains useful as an organising heuristic for designing and evaluating publishing communication. Its strength in the present study lies in its compatibility with both visual communication and platform-based consumer journeys.

AIDA also permits the two core modules to be connected analytically. Prescription-Style visuals operate primarily at the Attention and Interest stages by making the need–benefit relationship immediately legible. Persona-based recommendation strengthens Desire through narrative identification, trust, and social proof. Friction-reduced platform design then supports Action. Malaysian studies show that trust, web interactivity, perceived enjoyment, and electronic word-of-mouth are important drivers of social-shopping behaviour or intention (Ahmad et al., 2022; Wan Nawang et al., 2025).

Consumer Culture Theory provides a complementary explanation of how consumption is embedded in identity, social relationships, and cultural meaning (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Book selection is not only an informational decision; it is also a symbolic act through which readers express aspiration, belonging, taste, and personal values. Malaysian evidence also suggests that reading habits are socially embedded through attitudes and parental influence (Rasiah et al., 2022). This perspective is especially relevant for Generation Z, whose consumption practices are often publicly negotiated through digital platforms.

Conceptual Integration and Research Propositions

The literature supports four linked propositions. First, greater visual diagnostic clarity should improve rapid recognition of a book's intended function. Second, solution-oriented information should increase perceived relevance when it matches a reader's self-identified need. Third, an authentic and knowledgeable individual persona should strengthen trust and purchase intention relative to impersonal promotion. Fourth, the combined modules should generate stronger behavioural responses when the path from recommendation to transaction is simple. These propositions form the conceptual basis for the developmental methodology described below; they are not presented as completed empirical findings.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts developmental research combined with an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design. This approach is appropriate because the central output is an artefact, a Biblioprescription framework and operating guide that must be constructed from stakeholder evidence and subsequently tested. The methodology comprises four connected phases, which are, needs analysis, model and stimulus development, digital A/B validation, and integrated refinement. As this manuscript presents the framework and research protocol before completion of the validation study, no empirical effect is claimed.

Phase 1: Needs Analysis and Parameter Exploration

The qualitative phase is designed to identify the communication gap between existing Malay-language book products and Generation Z's expectations. It begins with a structured audit of 50 bestselling titles produced by a national literary institution or comparable local publishers. The audit codes cover hierarchy, typography,

colour, density of cover information, explicitness of benefit, intended reader, and the visibility of solution cues. Its purpose is not to judge literary quality but to identify recurring visual and informational patterns.

A digital netnography will then examine at least 500 publicly available user comments from prominent book-discovery and social-commerce settings, including TikTok Shop and Shopee. The analysis will focus on the language readers use to describe problems, aspirations, selection criteria, trust, disappointment, and purchase motivation. Only publicly observable material will be collected, and reporting will paraphrase user content and remove identifying details where required by institutional ethics procedures.

Finally, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with approximately 10 experienced book reviewers or live-stream presenters. Questions will address persona construction, recommendation credibility, content knowledge, disclosure, audience interaction, and conversion cues. Interview and netnographic material will be coded thematically using NVivo. The phase will produce a needs taxonomy, a visual-design parameter set, and a persona-communication parameter set.

Phase 2: Framework and Digital Stimulus Development

Phase 2 translates the qualitative findings and the literature-derived propositions into an AIDA–Biblioprescription prototype. High-fidelity digital mock-ups will be created for two conditions. Version A, the control, will reproduce a conventional book-sales interface using the existing cover and a linear synopsis. Version B, the experimental condition, will display a Prescription-Style cover, an “active ideas” panel, concise solution points, the intended reader profile, and a short persona-led recommendation.

To protect internal validity, both conditions should use the same title, price, author information, platform format, exposure device, and transaction cue. The experimental condition should alter only the theory-relevant visual and persona components. A small cognitive pretest with members of the target population should assess clarity, realism, manipulation recognition, reading time, and any unintended difference in perceived book quality.

Phase 3: Digital A/B Validation

The validation phase proposes a randomised between-subjects A/B test with 400 Generation Z participants aged 18–24. Recruitment may occur at universities, cafés, and book fairs to reach active digital consumers while retaining diversity in reading frequency. Participants will be randomly assigned to the control or Biblioprescription condition and will view a simulated book-sales interface on a tablet. Informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymity, and the right to withdraw will be established before exposure.

Attention will be operationalised through discovery speed, correct identification of the book’s function, and screen-view duration. Interest will be measured using perceived relevance, information clarity, and willingness to learn more. Desire will be assessed through reviewer trust, expected personal usefulness, and purchase intention. Action will be represented by observable interface behaviour such as clicking “Learn More,” saving the title, adding it to a simulated cart, or selecting “Buy Now.” A purchase simulation should be clearly disclosed so that participants do not incur financial obligations.

Table 1. Operationalisation of the AIDA–Biblioprescription framework

AIDA stage	Biblioprescription component	Proposed procedure	Primary indicators
Attention	Prescription-Style visual hierarchy	Randomised brief exposure to conventional or experimental interface	Discovery speed; correct function recognition; view duration
Interest	Active ideas and solution points	Comparison of linear synopsis with layered functional information	Perceived relevance; information clarity; exploration intention

AIDA stage	Biblioprescription component	Proposed procedure	Primary indicators
Desire	Individual persona recommendation	Exposure to a short, transparent reviewer-led consultation	Trust; expected usefulness; purchase intention
Action	Low-friction transaction cues	Simulated learn-more, save, add-to-cart, or buy-now options	Click-through; save; cart selection; simulated conversion

Note. The indicators are proposed measures for validation and do not represent completed findings.

Measurement and Analysis

Multi-item Likert scales will be used for relevance, clarity, trust, usefulness, and purchase intention, supported by behavioural measures recorded by the prototype. Scale items should undergo expert review and pilot testing before the main experiment. Internal consistency will be examined before composite scores are calculated. Descriptive statistics will summarise the sample and response patterns, while independent-samples t-tests will compare mean outcomes across conditions when distributional assumptions are satisfied. Categorical action outcomes may additionally be examined using chi-square tests or binary logistic regression. Effect sizes and confidence intervals should accompany significance tests so that practical importance is not inferred from p-values alone.

The qualitative and quantitative strands will be integrated through a joint interpretation process. Qualitative themes will explain why particular visual or persona elements matter, while the experiment will indicate whether the integrated design changes the proposed AIDA outcomes. Disconfirming evidence will be retained during refinement. The final output will be a Biblioprescription operating guide specifying design principles, persona practices, ethical boundaries, measurement indicators, and conditions under which the framework should not be used.

DISCUSSION

The proposed Biblioprescription framework offers a structured explanation of how book-product design and reviewer communication may work together in digital discovery. Its central contribution is the alignment of four response stages with four operational components, which are, Prescription-Style visual diagnosis at Attention, solution-oriented information at Interest, an individual persona at Desire, and a low-friction transaction path at Action. The framework is deliberately modular. Publishers can test each component separately, but its theoretical value lies in the coordinated journey from recognition to informed action.

Attention: Prescription-Style Visual Diagnosis

At the Attention stage, the cover and first-screen presentation function as a diagnostic interface. The user should be able to identify the subject, intended reader, and principal benefit without reading a long synopsis. This does not imply that all book covers should imitate pharmaceutical packaging literally. The transferable principle is structured clarity, a limited hierarchy, prominent benefit cues, and language that connects the book to an identifiable need. The experimental question is whether this arrangement improves recognition and exploration relative to a conventional presentation, not whether a particular aesthetic appears more fashionable.

Interest: Solution-Oriented Information Architecture

Interest develops when visual attention is followed by perceived relevance. The framework therefore replaces an exclusively linear promotional synopsis with concise information blocks that explain the book's "active ideas," scope, intended use, and limits. This structure is consistent with cognitive load principles because it organises information into meaningful units, but it should not oversimplify complex works. Literary and

scholarly depth can be preserved through layered information: an immediate solution cue for discovery, followed by a fuller synopsis, sample pages, author context, and critical reviews for evaluation.

Desire: The Individual Persona Module

At the Desire stage, the reviewer acts as a “literacy pharmacist” only in a metaphorical sense, an informed guide who matches a book to a reader’s expressed interest. The persona module contains five functions—need framing, content interpretation, personal relevance, evidence of credibility, and a transparent recommendation. Its effectiveness should be evaluated through trust and expected usefulness rather than popularity alone. A large follower count may increase reach without improving informed choice.

The module also requires safeguards. Reviewers should disclose sponsorship, avoid claiming that a book can diagnose or cure a condition, and recommend professional support when content concerns serious mental-health risk. These boundaries are especially important when the visual metaphor resembles a health product. Ethical implementation can strengthen trust because it distinguishes useful guidance from manipulative certainty.

Action: From Intention to Measurable Behaviour

In social commerce, the final transition from desire to action is often facilitated by embedded links, platform checkout, time-sensitive offers, bundles, or retailer integration. These mechanisms reduce transaction friction. Evidence that perceived ease of use, interactivity, trust, enjoyment, and electronic word-of-mouth shape Malaysian social-shopping behaviour supports the need to evaluate the transaction environment alongside promotional content (Ahmad et al., 2022; Wan Nawang et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the model should not assume that convenience alone determines purchase; price, availability, prior reading habits, and trust in the seller remain relevant external influences.

Theoretical Contribution

The framework makes three theoretical contributions. First, it extends bibliotherapy-informed thinking into book discovery while explicitly separating a marketing and literacy function from clinical treatment. Second, it connects cognitive design and parasocial trust within a single consumer-journey structure. This connection explains why an effective cover may still fail without credible interpretation, and why an engaging reviewer may fail when the product proposition is visually unclear. Third, it converts AIDA from a general promotional sequence into a set of operational and testable book-marketing outcomes.

Practical Implications

For Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka and other local publishers, Biblioprescription can be used as a development and evaluation tool rather than as a one-off campaign theme. Editorial, design, metadata, reviewer relations, and e-commerce teams can use a shared template to identify the reader need, formulate accurate benefit cues, produce a layered description, select a suitable persona, and define measurable AIDA indicators before launch. The same process may support demand-informed publishing and reduce reliance on promotional intuition.

The framework may also support the visibility of Malay-language titles by making their relevance more immediately legible in platform settings. Its purpose is not to imitate imported self-help products or to subordinate literature to sales. Rather, it provides a bridge between the intellectual value already present in a book and the discovery practices of a younger digital audience. Implementation should retain linguistic quality, cultural nuance, authorial intent, and genre differences.

Limitations and Future Validation

This paper is conceptual and developmental, thus consequently, the proposed causal relationships remain to be tested. The AIDA structure may also appear more linear than actual platform behaviour, where users move repeatedly between discovery, peer discussion, sampling, and purchase. The proposed sample of 18–24-year-olds does not represent all members of Generation Z or readers outside Malaysia. Moreover, effects may vary

by genre, reading proficiency, language preference, platform, reviewer–audience fit, and prior familiarity with the title.

Future research should compare the visual and persona modules independently and jointly through a factorial design, test multiple genres and platform formats, and follow participants beyond simulated purchase to examine borrowing, reading completion, recommendation, and repeat engagement. Qualitative follow-up should also investigate whether readers perceive the prescription metaphor as helpful, patronising, commercial, or culturally appropriate. Such work is necessary before the framework is adopted as an industry standard.

CONCLUSION

This paper develops a Biblioprescription framework that integrates Prescription-Style visuals and individual persona modules for Generation Z book marketing. The framework responds to a practical mismatch between conventional book promotion and digital discovery practices by linking visual clarity, solution-oriented information, reviewer trust, and transaction design to the Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action stages. It reframes the book as a potentially relevant resource for a reader’s self-identified need while preserving a clear boundary between literacy promotion and clinical treatment.

The framework’s value lies in its testability. The proposed developmental mixed-methods design provides a route from needs analysis to prototype construction, randomised A/B validation, and evidence-based refinement. Until that validation is completed, Biblioprescription should be regarded as a theoretically grounded proposition rather than a proven sales or wellbeing intervention. If implemented transparently and evaluated beyond immediate conversion, it offers publishers a promising way to connect Malay-language titles with younger readers and to support a more relevant and sustainable digital reading culture.

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