

HOW TO FIND THE BEST CATEGORIES & KEYWORDS



As a self-publisher, you are responsible for placing your book under the right categories. The wrong one will bury your book. But how do you find the best ones? The ones with interested buyers, but not too many competitors?

Amazon's Category System and the Others'

Writers in Facebook groups who publish to several online retailers overall say that they make around 80% from Amazon, and 20% from other bookstores.

Each bookstore can have their own category system, but since Amazon is responsible for the most sales overall, this article will deal with how their system works.

When a customer comes to Amazon to search for a book, they are met with a category system that Amazon has developed and keep adding new sub-categories to.

They look at buyer habits, and when a new trend occurs, they will create a new sub-category.

This is very different from the category system the writer sees when they want to publish their book. The internal category system is based on the BISAC code. BISAC stands for Book Industry Standards and Communications.

Amazon's self-publishing platform, KDP (Kindle Direct Publishing) will then look at the categories you chose and the keywords you selected to place your book into their external categories. The categories the customers see.

Do Categories Matter?

How do you buy books yourself?

Maybe you type in a keyword for a topic you want to read more about, and then you wonder if categories really matter.

Who goes to check the individual categories anyway?

This may surprise you. But it does not matter if nobody ever checks a category. It is still very important that you put your book into the best categories.

If your book becomes a best-seller in a category, then Amazon will label it as a Best Seller. This is social proof that this book is awesome, and more customers will choose to buy that book.

Those nice orange labels will show up, whether the customer browses categories or finds results with a keyword search.

A Black-Hat Trick

Because of those Best Seller labels, some unscrupulous publishers will add their book to obscure categories with very little competition, even though those categories are not at all relevant for their books.

This is why you can find a vampire novel under the geography category. At the moment, this trick seems to work, but Amazon is known for hitting down on people who try to game the system.

So, do not use black-hat tricks.

Instead, find good categories that your book rightfully could belong to.

Numerous Theories about What Defines a Good Category

If you do a research for how to choose Amazon categories, or if you buy courses about how to sell lots of books, you will see different theories.

Some will say that the book ranking number one in a category should have a certain rank or better, while the 100th book should have another specific rank.

Others look at how many books there are published in a category in combination how three of them are ranked.

Some will say that it is best if you do manual research, while others swear to software.

Whom should you listen to?

The best is to find someone who publishes in the same genre as you and look at what they do.

There is a difference between publishing notebooks, nonfiction books, and novels.

There are some general guidelines you can use, though.

How to Do Manual Research for Best Categories and Keywords

A manual research will take you longer time than using an app or a spreadsheet, but it may be the most precise tool.

To do manual research, you must open an incognito window in your browser, so that your previous browsing data from Amazon does not affect the results.

If you live outside of the US, and your market is within the US, then change your delivery address to one with a US zip code.

Then type a keyword into Amazon's search bar and see what results come up. Those reflect what users are searching for. And that means there will be some traffic—aka buyers—searching for those terms.

Next, look at the results you get. At the top left corner, you will see how many results Amazon has found for your query. The fewer the better, because that means lower competition. Sadly, it can also mean that nobody writes those books, because there are too few buyers interested in them.

Some publishers aim at results below 1,000 while others say 2,000, and there are probably even more opinions about this.

That's what you can check now by clicking on some of the results and study Amazon's best-seller ranks for the products.

Again, the lower the better. The best-selling books of all on Amazon has the rank 1. So, if you see several books among the results, and they all have relatively low rankings, there is a big chance that the books should sell well. How low a ranking? Some aim for below 50,000, others below 200,000, others again have other numbers.

Your last test is to check how hard it is to compete with the book, even if there are only few results. If all the books have thousands of reviews, it will be hard to compete.

Not impossible, but hard. Keep in mind that if it is hard to compete, then it will cost you more if you decide to run paid ads towards your book.

How to Research With the Help of Apps or Collected Data

The leading programs or collected data for doing category or keyword research are:

1. KDSPY
2. Publisher Rocket
3. K-lytics Datasheets

They work in different ways. And they are all based on a combination of gathered data and estimates.

KDSPY

KDSPY is a browser addon that works with Firefox and Chrome. There it sits on the toolbar until you need it. If you click the icon, it will go to Amazon's best-seller lists, and from there you can browse through categories.

When you find a category that you think will fit your book, you can click the button again and get a visual impression on how easy or difficult it is to compete in that category, and how its financial potential looks.

KDSPY uses its own algorithm to check Popularity, Potential, and Competition, and it shows the quality of each of these either with red, yellow or green lights.

Three green lights mean that if KDSPY is right, then you should publish in this category.

You will be able see how much money you can potentially make in this category as well based on an estimate.

KDSPY can also check keywords, but its strong side is categories.

Publisher Rocket

Publisher Rocket is a stand-alone app.

While KDSPY only checks Amazon, Publisher Rocket will also take Google searches and other book stores into consideration.

Its strong side is finding profitable keywords.

You can either type in a keyword you think will fit your book and get alternative suggestions. Or you can search categories and even check competitors.

K-lytics Datasheets

K-lytics Datasheets consist of Excel spreadsheets that you can either download and use in Excel. Or you can use them online within K-lytics' membership area.

It lists a number of categories, depending on your membership level. And you can sort the spreadsheet or filter out things that you are not interested in.

This means that with a few clicks, you can show the most profitable categories with the lowest competition. It takes the guesswork out of the equation, when you can go directly for those categories, instead of typing in possible categories to find the best.

References:

BISAC: https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US/help/topic/G200652170

KD Spy: <https://www.kdspyspy.com>

Publisher Rocket: <https://publisherrocket.com>

K-lytics: <https://k-lytics.com>