

# The impact of e-books and hardcovers on the paperback market in Japan

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This research was conducted by **Sumiko Asai** at the **Meiji University Chiyoda-ku, Japan**

## Summary

This study analysed the economics behind best-selling paperback novels in Japan, and how sales are affected by other available formats such as hardcover and e-books. The longer the time lapse between the publication of hardcovers and paperback, the higher the sales figures for hardcover copies will be. The publication of a novel in its paperback version makes demand for hardcovers almost non-existent. Paperbacks novels without hardcover or e-book versions still sell steadily.

## The battle between hardcovers and paperbacks is a matter of timing

Novels are a major genre in Japan, accounting for 40 per cent of total book sales. In Japan, books are first published as hardcovers followed by a paperback release approximately two years after their initial publication. This is a significant lag in comparison to the EU and US markets. In the Japanese market the release date of an e-book version is later than that of the paperback version. In the EU and US markets they usually appear with the publication of the hardcover.

## The true costs of publishing

The researchers concluded that the costs of material production of a novel are linked to a number of variables. As there is no clear way of predicting the success of a book in terms of sales, book prices vary based on the number of

pages (representing their manufacturing costs). Books previously released as hardcovers do not need further editing, thus reducing the costs of paperbacks. The introduction of e-books in Japan has not been as aggressive as in the US and the UK. Only a third of popular novels are published electronically.

This summary is by **Adina Stroia, King's Knowledge Exchange Associate**

## Keywords

**books** **Japan** **demand** **paperback** **price**

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