Pick your Poison - An Exploration Into the Most Popular Genres and Tags in Self-Published Fiction

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Introduction

Over the last few years, there has been a surge of self-published works (both actual novels and fanfiction). This project aims to figure out what main genres and tropes people love to read and write! Turning these genres and tags into a Twine pick-your-own ending novel is an easier and more interactive way for general audiences to see the genre spread and explore new tags or ideas that are unfamiliar to them.
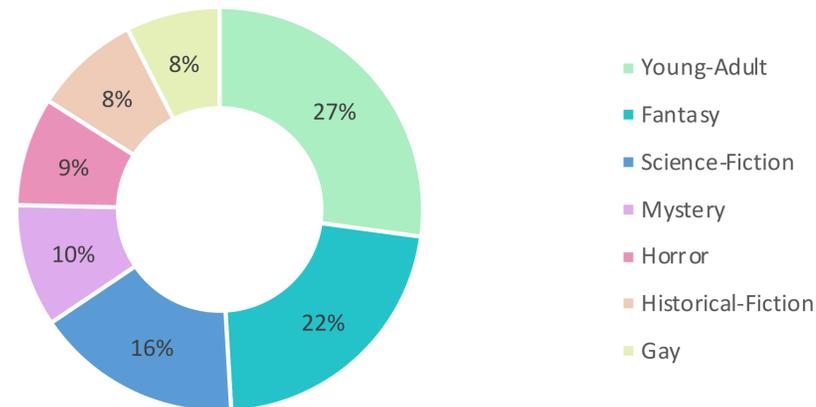
Methodology

1. Find the most popular genres and tags from a range of sites that offer self-publishing options: Archive of Our Own, Wattpad, Fanfiction.net, Smashwords, Rakuten Kobo, Lulu and Mindstir.

2. Get the most popular ones for the each website by using the search option and imputed the most popular words in English (the, be, to, of, and, a, in) to get the widest range of titles possible.

3. Take all the tags per word and get the average for each tag and then average results per website.

4. The averages could be compared and contrasted and added up to form a master list of most popular tags and genres.
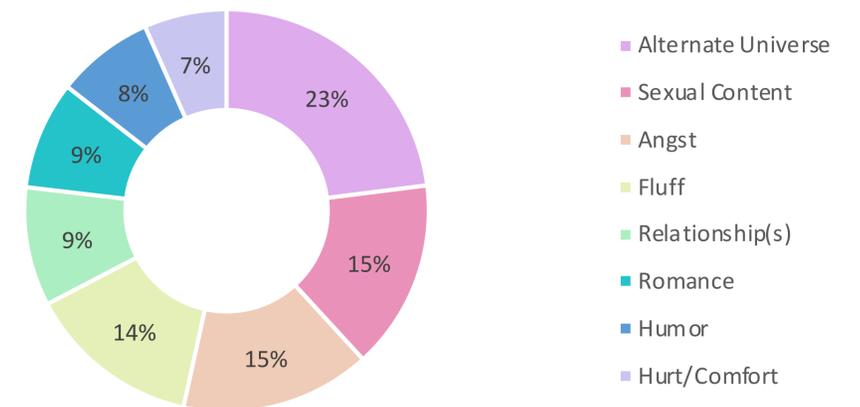
Results

Popular Genres in Fiction

27% — Young-Adult
22% — Fantasy
16% — Science-Fiction
10% — Mystery
9% — Horror
8% — Historical-Fiction
8% — Gay

Popular Tags in Fiction

23% — Alternate Universe
15% — Sexual Content
15% — Angst
14% — Fluff
9% — Relationship(s)
9% — Romance
8% — Humor
7% — Hurt/Comfort

Twine

FICTION

	Fantasy	Mystery	
Platonic	Romance	Romance	Platonic
Fluff	Angst	Fluff	Angst
Character Death	Enemies to Lovers	Friends to Lovers	Crime Solving Partners
Teen and up	Explicit	Roommates	Colleagues

Conclusion

This data set provides the most read sub-genres and tags within Fiction. Mainly what is interesting is that the data from both sites can be split into two main storylines, Romance and Non-romance. Within the data, sub tags for each sub-genre are still needed to flesh out the storylines, which is the next step in the research (and your favorite tropes and tags are always welcome!)

References

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Spector, Nicole Audrey. "Horror Authors Take a Stab at Self-Publishing: How Self-Publishing Is Helping Revitalize a Genre." The Publishers weekly 263.43 (2016): 38. Print.
Kohn, Kara. "Romance Revs up: Suspense, Shifters, Series, and Self-Publishing Are Pushing the Romance Envelope in All Directions." Library journal (1976) 140.17 (2015): 38. Print.
Berglund, Karl. "Genres at Work: A Holistic Approach to Genres in Book Publishing." European Journal of Cultural Studies 24.3 (2021): 757–776. Web.

Additional Links

Archive of Our Own - https://archiveofourown.org/
FanFiction - https://www.fanfiction.net/
Wattpad - https://www.wattpad.com/
Smash Words - ttps://www.smashwords.com/
Kobo - https://www.kobo.com/
Lulu - https://www.lulu.com/shop
Mind Stir Media - https://mindstirmedia.com/