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Kiswahili adult fiction publishing in South Africa, how SMME's can contribute and benefit

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Research Report: Publishing Studies AFRT7034A

Declaration form

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

School of ……Language, Literature and Media…….

SENATE PLAGIARISM POLICY

Declaration by Students

I _____Chelsea Kathini Musee_____ (Student number: _____1834501_____) am a student registered for _____Publishing Studies_____ in the year ___2024____. I hereby declare the following:

I am aware that plagiarism (the use of someone else's work without their permission and/or without acknowledging the original source) is wrong.
I confirm that ALL the work submitted for assessment for the above course is my own unaided work except where I have explicitly indicated otherwise.
I have followed the required conventions in referencing the thoughts and ideas of others.
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Dedication

To my parents Ndeke and Ngina Musee, and my grandmother Winfred Munyao, who have stood by me, blessed me and encouraged me every step of the way. I could not have done it without the wonderful support system that you all have so warmly given.

Acknowledgments

Kwa mungu nampa utukufu, kwa kuifanya mizigo yangu kuwa nyepesi.

I would like to thank my academic supervisor, Laetitia Cassells, thank you so much for your support, valuable advice and our fruitful conversations through both my Honours and Masters studies. I would also like to thank the Publishing Department for providing me with partial funding towards my studies.

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Lastly, but certainly not least, I would like to thank my sisters and amazing support system, Jessica, Rose, Stephanie and Micheline, thank you for all the coffee dates and catch-up sessions for when I felt overwhelmed.

Mafanikio sio mwisho, kushindwa si mbaya: ni ujasiri wa kuendelea ndio muhimu. – Swahili proverb

Abstract

The research report will observe a sample of publishers that engage in cross border trade in a well-established platform, and the extent to which this promotes intra-Africa trade. The research will also look at how the expansion of Kiswahili fiction as a cross boarder endeavour for small publishers, will contribute to the mandate of the African Union cultural renaissance and the African Union. This study will use a mixed method research approach. The quantitative method will include collection of data from Nielsen Bookscan, the collected data from will assist in identifying trends and establishing a timeline of Kiswahili fiction trade sales. This study aims to discuss how small publishing houses can contribute to a market already in existence by producing content that can be exported and imported. Additionally, the researcher aims to investigate the sale and distribution of Kiswahili literature that is already available in South Africa. I hope to find data on the background of the publishing industry in the various countries I have chosen to understand how cross border trade between these countries may work and benefit SMME's.

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

ABC- African Books Collective

ACFTA- African Continental Free Trade

APN African Publishing Network

AR- African Renaissance

ATR- African Trade Report

AU- African Union

CFTA- Continental Free Trade Agreement

NBS – Nielsen Book Scan

NRS- National Reading Survey

PASA- Publishing Association of South Africa

SMME- Small, Medium and Micro Enterprise

Key Words: African literature, adult fiction, African free trade, Intercontinental trade, small publishing houses, African Renaissance

Chapter 1 Introduction

Background

Kiswahili is a widely spoken language especially in East Africa namely Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Other countries that speak Kiswahili include; South Sudan, Somalia, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, Comoros, Oman, Yemen, and Botswana, and more across the globe. As such, Kiswahili is a growing language in Africa with over 200 million speakers, and globally is among the top ten most spoken languages (Zell, 2018). This makes Kiswahili a potential language to promote through trade. Small publishers may collaborate with each other in order to create a distribution plan on how to circulate Kiswahili titles among each other. In 2015, during the 25th Ordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government, the African Union Assembly officially began deliberations to establish a Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA), it is a free trade consensus that unites 1.3 billion people in 55 African countries. Based on the total number of participating countries, the CFTA is the largest free trade area in the world. Trade started on January 1, 2021, with the agreement having been established in 2018. The continental integration and development agendas for Africa were seen to be significantly advanced by the establishment of CFTA (Luke, Sommer, Schillinger, & Theemann, 2017), and a widely spoken language can be a key tool in pursuit to achieve this goal.

This may provide African nations with opportunities to increase intra-African trade, expand, experience structural change, and achieve significant human rights and poverty-related specifications set forth in the continent's Agenda 2063, the CFTA is an important project in addition to the global Agenda 2030 (Luke *et al*, 2017). To this end, South Africa and Kenya have improved their bilateral agreements, especially in the areas of trade (goods and services), which could include books and sales of rights; and migration, which could see more Kiswahili speakers travelling to South Africa (Zell, 2018). This study proposes such actions are relevant in establishing a market that can provide Kiswahili fiction titles for adults between countries in Southern Africa and Eastern Africa, as per the countries selected for this research report.

This research report will focus on adult market for Kiswahili fiction in South Africa. At present, there are initiatives for indigenous publishing of educational texts, yet indigenous language trade publishing for adults is not available (Le Roux, Tshuma, Harvett, and Cassells, 2022 pp 28-29). To support the Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMME),

small publishers may enhance the distribution of Kiswahili adult fiction, through territorial rights sales as a result of established trade agreements.

Several African nations are making an effort to respond to the request for an African Renaissance by stepping up their efforts to revive their native languages, cultures, and knowledge networks (Jjingo and Bakize, 2022). The publishing sector plays a crucial role in bringing the African Renaissance to life through the dissemination and production of literature. Former South African President, Nelson Mandela oversaw a number of progressive changes during his administration, from 1994-1999, one of which was the restructuring of the media sector (Jjingo and Visser, 2017). The primary goal of this transformation was to guarantee that the media industry became multicultural to serve all segments of South African society. The demands were as strong for the book industry, even if the major emphasis was on the traditional press, radio, and broadcast sectors (Möller and Le Roux, 2017).

Kenya and Tanzania are crucial countries that are identified in this research report, because they can be possible trade partners considering they have an abundance of Kiswahili literature (Jingo, C and Visser, M., 2017). Tanzania has led the continent as the first country to produce a large number of Kiswahili fiction titles starting in the early 1990s. Thereafter Kenyan authors were able to create their own Kiswahili fiction titles. Therefore, both Kenya and Tanzania are relevant as the origin of Kiswahili literature, to this research report as the majority of Kiswahili adult fiction content is produced in these countries and as a result can benefit and aid intra-continental distribution. Overall, indigenous authors have made significant contributions to the advancement of Kiswahili. By enhancing the rich body of written works in the language and incorporating a variety of themes, their intended readership continues to expand (Mohochi, 2019).

The emergence of smartphones has further altered how people interact with digital reading technologies and create imaginative stories. Digital reading is becoming more engaging, dynamic, and user-friendly thanks to smartphones (Bouaamri, Otike, & Hajdu, 2022). Practical e-reading innovation apps like text-to-speech and on-screen font size changes are now easier to utilise because of these gadgets. Although digital tools and resources have made it easier to use data and information, open access to databases, archives, and resources remains the major concern for the nations of Africa (Combrinck and Mtsatse, 2019).

Inadequate internet connection continues to be a major public policy concern in Africa since it is a prerequisite for digital engagement in both business and community. Even while networks and connection have grown significantly, they are still insufficient to meet the demands of most cultures since they are neither accessible nor affordable. African nations confront numerous limitations and challenges regarding digital resources and accessibility (Zell, 2021). One of the goals for the AU 2063 agenda is to develop more digital reading platforms that are accessible and affordable to adults (African Union page 150, 2015). There is progress being made for digital reading, through the use of various platforms, this may be a potential distribution channel alongside the distribution of print materials. The National Reading Survey (2023) states that 68% of South Africans can read in multiple languages, while 63% of them can read at least one African language. The report further indicates that there is a demand for adult literature in African languages, with 76% of African language speakers who would like to read for enjoyment in an African language. This is relevant as it points to readers who would appreciate reading content in an African language. Small publishers can potentially appeal to an indigenous adult fiction book market, for the purpose of this analysis, the Kiswahili adult fiction market (Polzer Ngwato, Shilakoe, Morse, Huston 2023, pp 102-104).

According to the Publishing Association of South Africa (PASA) industry report of 2021/22, the rights sales for the trade sector generated revenue from book related activities at
R 1 310 000 000 and R 259 000 000 for local and imported, respectively. In 2021/22 sales were recorded as R 638 000 local and R 795 000 for imported rights (Le Roux *et al,* 2022 p, 25). The selling of rights sales can be seen as a collaboration between publishers and content can be made available across a variety of languages, formats, geographies, and platforms. The primary goal of selling rights is to generate revenue for the rights holders, which is typically the author and publishing house, in addition to the revenue from publishing and selling the book in their native market and internationally in the original language. This is beneficial for SMMEs as they will be able to reach a wide range of indigenous adult fiction reading markets as they participate with trade other African countries. While taking rights sales figures into consideration, this may present opportunities for small publishers to enter a niche marketplace in the South African context, while catering to potential intra-African trade.

Rationale

The sales figures, in turn, can support small publishers to develop an extensive title list for Kiswahili adult fiction as well as significant collaborations with other SMMEs, and therefore they can be in a position to compete with larger publishing houses. Through intra-continental trade, and for the adult fiction market in indigenous languages, this can positively affect other areas of trade if good working relationships are established. SMMEs, for instance, as it relates to cross border trade and establishing beneficial export distribution channels.

In particular the research report will observe a sample of publishers that engage in cross border trade in a well-established platform, and the extent to which this promotes intra-Africa trade. The research will also look at how the expansion of Kiswahili fiction as a cross border endeavour for small publishers, will contribute to the mandate of the African Union cultural renaissance and the African Union (AU) 2063 agenda. To realise the full potential, however, of this emerging market would require collaboration among small publishers in order to promote resilient circulation and the establishment of a book distribution network.

Problem statement

A strong economy is supported and impacted by the creation, success, and sustainability of SMMEs. For example, in South Africa, all invested shareholders acknowledge that it is important to encourage the development of SMMEs in order to facilitate their expansion, and ultimately growth of the economy (Le Roux *et al*, 2022). The challenge is not a lack of readership or a market for Kiswahili adult fiction, but rather the limited access and availability of Kiswahili adult fiction content in the established book market. Through continuous access to content, readers would gain from this partnership, and publishers would profit from reduced costs and increased reach. Thus, promoting a sustainable solution to have Kiswahili adult fiction literature in circulation throughout the market.

This means, small publishers can consider this and begin circulating Kiswahili adult fiction titles among each other. South Africa is a developing market for publishing, and has several SMMEs that specifically focus on publishing indigenous African language fiction. However, multinational publishers are still dominant players in Africa, which also do not support trade in adult fiction. This research report proposes to trace trends and investigate if the circulation and distribution of Kiswahili adult fiction books between Kenya, Ghana, as well as South Africa can support

a Kiswahili adult fiction book market. By distributing Kiswahili adult fiction in other African countries, this may develop trade as Kiswahili speakers will be able to purchase Kiswahili adult fiction books outside of their respective countries.

Research Questions

What are the potential growth opportunities for Kiswahili adult fiction in South Africa?

Sub question 1). What readership is currently active for the Kiswahili fiction book trade in South Africa?

Sub question 2). How can intra-continental trade support authorship and publishing activities?

Sub question 3). How can small publishers leverage potential growth opportunities for their benefit?

Overview of methodology

For this research report a mixed method approach is used in order to answer the research questions as well as identify what the current market in South Africa is for Kiswahili adult fiction publishing. The methodology used consists of interviews, data from Nielsens Bookscan as well as a questionnaire. The data collected from Nielsens Bookscan was used to review sales data of Kiswahili books that have been sold in South Africa between 2009 and 2023, to have a better understanding of the South African market. Policy and trade agreements will be reviewed before conducting the interviews and sending out the questionnaire, in order to investigate the possibility of trade and distribution of Kiswahili adult fiction amongst small publishing houses. The information to be reviewed and considered before collection of data will be Nielsen Bookscan data, polices and trade agreements as well as the African union 2063 agenda, this will be done to support the questions asked in the questionnaire and interviews. Purposive sampling will be used when selecting the participants for the interviews and questionnaire, with members from the African Books Collective being considered for contact.

In this chapter, the background, rationale, problem statement and research questions have been identified and discussed. By combining all the components in this chapter, it provides context as to the discussions in the following chapter.

Breakdown per Chapter

There are five chapters in this research report, chapter one discusses all the necessary background, rationale, problem statement, research questions and an overview of methodology for the research report. Chapter one includes background that will be expanded on in chapter two with relevant literature. The second chapter contains the literature review with themes identified, all the literature selected for this research report serves a purpose to understand the state of trade publishing as it is and how small publishing houses can benefit from inter-continental trade. Chapter three goes into the methodology and all the research instruments used, research design as well as research methods. Chapter four will be a presentation of the findings from both the quantitative and the qualitative data, the answers from the interviews conducted. Chapter five will discuss the findings in chapter four as well as present the conclusion.

Through the context in the background, chapter 1 establishes the research problem, rationale as well as the research questions, all which are relevant in investigating what the current market needs are for Kiswahili adult fiction publishing. SMMEs may bridge the gap by collaborating with other SMMEs in order to distribute Kiswahili adult fiction that is currently present. The following chapter will include published literature that is relevant to the research report. The literature review is significant as it will aid in answering the research questions and provide further information on various growth opportunities small publishers may benefit from.

Chapter 2 Literature review

In this chapter, an account of the published literature on the importance of Kiswahili fiction. The value and benefits of its trade as well as its potential growth opportunities and market as to how it can be traded inter-continentally. Through the view of policies and trade agreements and how similar endeavours have been conducted by other SMME's with supporting scholarly articles will be reviewed. Such a background is essential because it can aid in gaining insights on how inter-continental trade can be supported and interrogate what resources and policies are available to be considered. The collaboration of SMME's through inter-continental trade may aid in cultivating a reading culture which may draw in a larger reading market to achieve benefits to the readers, authors and publishers of Kiswahili literature. There are SMME's that have engaged in the publishing, translation, and distribution of Kiswahili adult fiction.

South African publishing industry

After gaining democracy in 1994, South Africa has experienced tremendous development, including severe political instability. This has had a significant impact on the South African publishing industry as well as authors and the works of literature that has been published since 1994 (Pâquet, 2021). Indigenous languages, markets, publishers, and trade publishing in South Africa have all been impacted by these developments (Möller and Le Roux, 2017). The market for readers of English-language novels has long been robust, although Afrikaans has always been popular, but African languages are still underrepresented. African language novels are a risk for publishers, who justify their reluctance by pointing out the small reading markets (Suriano, 2021). Publishers are independent businesses with a focus on profitability (Edwards and Ngwaru, 2011). Due to the purported limit in adult readers of African-language literature, publishers have shifted their focus to creating African-language books for schools and children (Pâquet, 2021).

There is therefore a chance that the advancement of technology will propel African literature from to where it is today, shifting African literature beyond a 'niche' to emerging as a more evident part of the international literary scene, by making narratives written by and for Africans more widely accessible and read (Adenekan, 2021). This implies that mobile devices and internet platforms can act as a stimulant to develop a new reading culture in Africa. The potential to build a communal space centred upon particular stories and

storytelling forms should be the primary focus of digital publishing, rather than just platforms and electronic gadgets (Pâquet, 2021). However, given the rapid advancement of technology, being online and instantly accessible also implies being receptive to customer needs (Combrinck and Mtsatse, 2019).

Even if more Africans are gaining access to the Internet and more modern African literature is being written online, one of the main obstacles is the ongoing lack of funding for this online creative output (Adenekan, 2021). The persistence of some extremely traditional views about how literature is consumed, such as the idea that digital publishing is heresy and that books should only be read in hard copy, presents another significant obstacle (Combrinck and Mtsatse, 2019). But there are problems with the writing standards of the published works despite initiatives like Okadabooks, where writers, both established and unpublished, can immediately upload their works to the app (Adenekan, 2021).

Some challenges in South African digital publishing include the dearth of accurate and valuable statistical information about digital publishing in the trade publishing sector. Tracking digital publishing activity in South Africa is challenging due to a lack of standardised data, since e-book marketplaces are still in their infancy, and therefore it is difficult to draw comparisons between them and the publishing industry as a whole (Combrinck and Mtsatse, 2019).

The majority of e-book publishers are SMMEs, which implies that a company's size may have an adverse effect on how it enters new markets. This is to be expected as a publisher's size is directly related to its operations, assets, and strategies (Gaigher, Le Roux and Bothma, 2014). The expectations of its stakeholders and current consumers, coupled with their less flexible and more cautious operating practises, provide challenges for larger organisations to pursue new markets and digital publishing. Their present clientele and investors have some degree of control over the flow of resources (Pade-Khene, 2018). Before they can even begin the process of publishing for a new market, they must first negotiate a convoluted organisational structure and hierarchy (Zell, 2018). Since they may act more instinctively when making commercial decisions, SMMES are more likely to adapt to entering a new market as they may not be faced with these issues.

Digital publishing in African language is beneficial to small publishing houses as they can curate content that has appeal to readers that are interested in reading in African languages, further encouraging intra-continental trade to import books from other African countries (AU, 2015). Without this kind of intervention, the current market is not hospitable for adult fiction in African indigenous language (Higgs and Smith, 2021). As the market for indigenous African language publishing is so small, it would be beneficial if SMMEs were to enter the market, because bigger multinational publishers are less likely to publish Kiswahili adult fiction and also publish books for mass market and as a result their overheads and costs are higher (Zell, 2018). Despite the high prevalence of African languages among recognised readers, provision for readers who read in their native tongues is not taken into account when analysing the limited book industry that exists (Suriano, 2021). Therefore, small publishers may participate because there are less likely to be large role players challenging the market share and can cater to the need for indigenous language publishing, and are in the best position to collaborate across borders (Edwards and Ngwaru, 2011).

History of indigenous language publishing in South Africa

Indigenous language publishing is essential to the social, artistic, and financial development of a country. Such literature serves as a reflection of a community's belief frameworks, written and spoken language, and artistic manifestations, as well as its history and experiences and through a people's written work, this informs their interactions with other civilizations (Motsaathebe, 2011). Publishing fosters the development, preservation, and enhancement of the social environment and interpersonal relationships (Edwards and Ngwaru, 2011). African governments are unfamiliar with the financial and cultural significance of the publishing industry, and as a result publishers for indigenous literature in Africa keep working for autonomy to achieve these goals (Maliszewska *et al*, 2020). They also want to be free from the limitations of their colonial history, such as the restrictions of economic reform laws and regulations, the continuing monopoly of multinational publishers, and limited policies regarding languages (AU, 2016).

Both privately owned and parastatal indigenous language publishers were founded following the early stages of independence, however, African governments, whose main focus was economic growth, supported modern cultural enterprises very little or not at all, viewing cultural literature predominantly as folklore and tradition (Motsaathebe, 2011). The growth of

creators' and publishers' rights was not adequately addressed by regulations, and copyright management and law were minimal (Bgoya and Jay, 2015). Government polices however were a hindrance, one example is the imposition of customs and taxation on paper, which is the main component used in book production, as well as additional supplies for printing equipment, like films, plates, pigments, and replacement parts (Bgoya and Jay, 2015).

The dominant influence of foreign languages, a fixation with western and European literature, increasing production expenses, inadequate distribution channels, and excessive and unauthorised copying that is inconsistent with fair use all put book publishers at a fundamental disadvantage when they try to publish in indigenous languages (Wangen, 2017). Low salaries and the difficulty of printing books across a number of languages effectively prevent significant parts of society from consuming literature, which limits the potential market for books in South Africa. The 15% VAT on books in South Africa is greater than in most other nations, and the result has led to high retail costs that often keep books from reach of most customers (Lutshaba, 2021).

African Union 2063 agenda

The AU Agenda 2063 is the continent's strategic vision and roadmap for becoming a potential international powerhouse (Sebahizi, 2018). It serves as a plan of action for the continent that seeks to achieve sustainable and equitable growth. Moreover, it is a tangible representation of the continental effort to achieve unification, autonomy, liberty, advancement, and mutual success attempted under Pan-Africanism as well as the African Renaissance (AU, 2012).

The African cultural renaissance is relevant to inter-continental trade as its main focus is to create products in indigenous language for indigenous readership by indigenous companies that may be distributed however, the lack of adult content (literature) in indigenous languages on the continent, for the cultural renaissance may hinder this goal (Parshotam, 2018). Kiswahili is recognised as a Pan African language, and therefore, is in a good position to aid towards the achievement of the AU Agenda 2063 which promotes Pan Africanism, there are more than 200 million speakers of Swahili in Africa, making it one of the world's 10 most widely spoken languages. It is spoken in over 14 countries in Africa (Whiteley, 2023). As such, the concept of content being developed in Kiswahili can support local publishing

houses in South Africa as well as sharing the content through intra-continental trade which is beneficial in promoting the ideologies of the African Renaissance (AU, 2016).

To this end, the African Academy of Languages promotes the incorporation of African languages in all spheres of African society to aid the advancement and integration of the continent (Sebahizi, 2018). The academy aims to advance African languages, encourage the use of various languages at all levels especially in the field of education, but also the relevance of literature outside the context of educational publishing. In this context, this is relevant to the research report as the AAL may also benefit between the trade of Kiswahili adult fiction with SMME's. Their mandate is to ensure that African languages are developed and promoted as components of African unity and growth, to this end they offer a course on the Kiswahili language and can benefit from Kiswahili adult fiction literature outside of study material (Apiko and Aggad, 2018). Taking the foregoing aspects together, the aim of this research is to identify how publication of fiction works in Kiswahili can be traded as it is a widely spoken language across the African continent, spoken in over 14 countries in Africa, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), South Sudan, Somalia, Mozambique and Malawi (Aniche, 2020).

Benefits of promoting Kiswahili literature

Africa has limited intra-continental trade; however, it continues to expand, with produced goods and agriculture being the main commodities in Africa, accounting for 17% of total commerce in 2017, up from 9% in 2000 (Abrego *et al*, 2020). In different continents like Asia and Europe, the percentage of intra-continental trade exceeds 50%. The emergence of localised economic agreements, improved financial conditions and structures, and a rise in the trade of goods have all contributed to the growth of cross-border trade in Africa (Apiko and Aggad, 2018). Relative to other continental groups, the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have the largest amounts of cross-border trade and commerce (Makumbirofa and Banya, 2023). This is beneficial to small publishing houses that are active within countries that have trade agreements set in place with South Africa, as it would be easier to form a distribution channel. The African Continental Free Trade Area can bring significant economic advantages to African nations in addition to increasing imports of new as well as conventional goods. These advantages include more regional capital flows, technological transfers, and higher revenue resulting

from more effective resource allocation that boosts efficiency and output (Maliszewska *et al*, 2020). In addition to cutting down tariffs on imported goods, African nations must lower additional trade obstacles by streamlining their customs processes, closing large infrastructure deficiencies, and enhancing business environments in order to secure these benefits (Afrika and Ajumbo, 2021). At the same time, as funds are redistributed in the market and activity shifts to regions with relatively lower costs, legislative measures are needed to be implemented to minimise the disproportionate impact of trade liberalisation on some populations (Abrego *et al*, 2020).

In Africa and the global community, Kiswahili remains among the most prominent spoken languages. For various reasons, it has experienced substantial growth and development from the early to mid-19th century (Romaine, 2023). Around the beginning of the 19th century, trading operations from the coastal region of East Africa began to travel inland, which resulted in the widespread adoption of Kiswahili by the populace (Dzahene-Quarshie, 2013). The methodical exploration of Kiswahili, the documenting of its grammar, and the creation of an alphabet based on Roman characters were all results of the keen interest European missionaries had in the language for their missionary work in East Africa (Kisurulia, 2020).

There are several reasons why Kiswahili could serve as the common language spoken throughout the African Union and the continent as a whole, as well as equally strong arguments for each of these reasons (Dzahene-Quarshie, 2013). Even if it may be a challenging endeavour, there is no denying that having a shared language can help achieve political, economic, and geographical unification on a continent where over two thousand languages are spoken in fifty-four countries (Kisurulia, 2020). For the most part, Kiswahili is linguistically and lexically similar to many African languages across the South, and Central countries in Africa. Its future growth can incorporate elements from almost all African languages due to its flexibility and high absorptive capacity (Romaine, 2023). This is relevant in regard to Kiswahili adult fiction books as there will be an opportunity for small publishers to incorporate translating local books into Kiswahili.

Book trade fairs and Government assistance

Publishing is a relationship dependent industry, particularly the trade of copyright related rights (audio, translation, and electronic rights, among others). At global book fairs,

publishing houses, presses, writers, and other key figures in the publishing sector get together annually to talk about matters that are publishing and book related along with signing book deals (Nwammuo *et al*, 2019). However, during COVID and lockdown constraints, the model for the relationship involving publishers and key stakeholders has altered since 2020. Online festivals have become the new venue for some of the biggest book fairs (Zell, 2021).

Only a small number of South African publishers participate in the three biggest book fairs held each year: the Frankfurt Book Fair, the London Book Fair, and the Bologna Book Fair. International book fairs are sometimes not accessible to publishers in the trade and other publishing sectors due to funding shortages and a lack of support and resources (Senkoro, 2022). Through the PASA/DTI Emerging exporters financing programme, the PASA and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) regularly finance 10 to 12 independent trade publishers to take part in international book fairs (Nel, 2021). Yet publishers' access to this financial possibility can be limited by stringent application requirements and administrative obstacles (Edwards and Ngwaru, 2011).

Certain major book fairs, such as the Frankfurt Book Fair Invitational programme offer funding initiatives specifically designed to accommodate small publishers from countries with a small publishing industry (Nel, 2021). There are rigorous submission requirements, and only 15 international book publishers are selected by the Frankfurt Book Fair to take part in the programme. Additionally, there isn't a robust or active literary agency structure in South Africa that supports and promotes the trade of subsidiary rights (Davis *et al,* 2019). However, given the obstacles South African publishers have while attending foreign book fairs, emerging online platforms may help them attend seminars at these events, make connections with possible business partners, and continue engaging in collaborations, Briza Publications has attended the Frankfurt Book Fair every year since 2010 to meet with publishers and institutions. Jacana Media attended Bologna Book Fair and won the award for Best African Children's Publisher in 2018 (Zell, 2019). Very few South African publishers attend three of the most important book fairs annually, including the Bologna book fair, London Book Fair and The Frankfurt book fair. Publishers across trade, scholarly and academic publishing sectors cannot always attend international book fairs, due to financial constraints and lack of support infrastructure. (ATR, 2022).

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The foundation of local publishing development may include local publishers, who can receive help from both regional and national publishing collaboratives (le Roux, 2019). To connect authors with publishers, the collaboratives could promote writers' discussion boards, book festivals, and web pages, as well as instruction on requirements for quality and innovation to facilitate book development and adaption across contexts and countries (Tchokothe, 2020). Reputable international book fairs in Africa include Lagos, Nigeria, Dakar, Senegal Nairobi, Kenya, and Accra, Ghana which provide great chances for networking, first-hand interactions with business experts, and marketing initiatives (Abrego *et al*, 2020).

Digital reading in Africa

Smartphone utilisation among internet users is at 84% according to the NRS (Polzer Ngwato *et al*, 2023). Contrary to popular belief, social media use does not interfere with "real reading," real reading refers to physical books or ebooks that have a substantial amount of text and that take time to read, long format writing, as opposed to reading short-handed content on social media according to the NRS (2023). Additionally, those who use social media for 11 to 20 hours each week are over twice as likely to be able to routinely read longer texts (Polzer Ngwato *et al*, 2023). Digital and electronic materials may be created more quickly and distributed more widely than print content. Additional advantages include the ability to engage with content through comments, feedback, and interactive debates as well as easier archiving and searching than when reading by a single individual at a time (Polzer Ngwato *et al*, 2023).

As stated in a report by the NRS (2023), most digital reading takes place on small screens with 84% of adults using smartphones to access their literature. Just 7% of internet users use personal computers and 1% use tablets as reported by the NRS (2023). Adults who read online do so at a rate of 55%, which has increased from 7% in 2016, although social media is not included, another significant increase is that 20% of adults own an eBook. This is relevant as it can be taken into consideration by SMME’s to distribute electronic content.

This increase in digital sales can also be seen in data from PASA, according to the PASA industry survey of 2021-22 states that revenue by genre and format in the trade sector,

specifically between locally published and imported content. Locally published digital adult fiction was R3 163 000 and R3 060 000 imported for 2020/21 and 2021/22, respectively (Le Roux *et al*, page 6 & 7, 2022). The lack of available print titles is significant as it indicates that there is a potential for growth in the digital medium, there are few books in indigenous languages and this coupled with a growing online readership, which means that digital books published in indigenous languages can be a possibility for SMME's to consider

In South Africa, data prices are still expensive even with the latest mandated price decreases by the major data carriers. The biggest obstacles to obtaining internet for most citizens are data costs, a shortage of devices with internet access, and knowledge of digital technologies, all of which are linked to impoverished circumstances, according to *The State of ICT in South Africa* report (Makumbirofa *et al*, 2023). As a result, the majority of South Africans are unable to afford to get online (Mothobi, Gillwald., & Rademan, 2018). In South Africa, there were 45.34 million internet users as of January 2024, or roughly 74.7% of the total population. Compared to last year, there has been an approximate 1.8 million rises in users (Cowling, 2024). The majority of South Africans (81.1%) use the internet via a laptop or desktop computer, while 98.7% use a mobile phone. Nevertheless, a large number of people and families lack access to the internet or the necessary gadgets (Cowling, 2024).

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According to Research ICT *Africa's Retail African Mobile Pricing* (RAMP) Index, in the first quarter of 2021, South Africa ranks 33rd out of 46 countries in terms of data per gigabyte pricing, placing it below average compared to other African nations (Chinembiri, 2020). Even with the lowering, prices continue to be anti-poor due to a shortage of regulation and an intrinsically defective market. Almost half the population of South Africans who are still offline are likewise not helped by the price cut (Chinembiri, 2020).

It is also possible to make an endless number of electronic copies of original works, which could pose a challenge to established industries like publishing, printing, and bookselling (Kilolo, 2022). To fully utilise the digital age, African publishers could collaborate and establish a digital distribution channel or a shared platform where content can be readily found. As print is still king in many publishing industries, a print distribution channel through boarders could be established to ensure that readers are able to receive Kiswahili adult fiction content (Zell, 2019). Additionally, digital files can be transmitted readily across borders,

whereas intellectual property rights are constrained by national laws. Nonetheless, this can be countered by selling rights, or collaborative publishing between publishing houses, this applies both digitally and in print (Combrinck and Mtsatse, 2019).

Since the early 2000s, small publishing houses throughout the African continent have experienced some growth (Kilolo, 2022). This is not even taking into account the growth in literary journals, writing classes, contests, awards, and original works (Mabweazara, 2016). The introduction and widespread use of digital materials and reading materials on electronic devices, for example, is associated with this subtle literary change (Abrams, 2016). These developments are transforming the ways in which Africans are producing content specifically for their own audience and how numerous readers in African nations are engaging with African literature (Mabweazara, 2016). In addition to the several other cutting-edge publishing ventures spread over Africa, Okadabooks is one among the many fascinating digital efforts happening across the continent (Mabweazara, 2018). It is transforming the manner in which fiction is generated and read in Africa. Publishing companies, like Cassava Republic, based in Nigeria, are emphasising digital literature more now that Ankara Press has launched and is offering romantic novels digitally (Kilolo, 2022).

Through these many channels, readers are introduced to fresh and inventive literature from throughout the continent, which more closely mirrors their own lived experiences. Additionally, they are all very influential in determining how African fiction is written and read in Africa (Abrams, 2016). Considering they can be viewed on mobile devices, Okadabooks are designed to be more affordable for users to buy while still being easily available. Thus, Okadabooks is creating new avenues for African literature to be distributed. The layout of Okadabooks further implies that readership in Africa, or specifically Nigerian readers in the instance of Okadabooks, are enthusiastic mobile content consumers (Zell, 2013).

Since they market books to a considerably larger audience at an inexpensive rate and enable new and creative ways to offer material to consumers, mobile phones are perhaps the most promising foundation for novel ideas to book distribution on the continent (Kilolo, 2022). Because so many languages are spoken in African, readers can now more easily obtain material written in several African languages attributable to digital advancements (Nesbitt-Ahmed, 2017). A good instance would be the previous mention of Ankara Press and their

Valentine's Day Anthology, that was released on February 14, 2015 (Adejunmobi, 2017). The collection had seven brief romance works that had been adapted into the authors' native languages, Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, Pidgin, Kiswahili, Kpelle, and French. The works were written in both English and the translated languages, and the resulting collection was released as a digital PDF book (Adejunmobi, 2017).

Ankara Press wasn't the sole platform experimenting with multilingual publishing. The Kenyan authors collaborative, Jalada Collective, produced a novella by Ngugi wa Thiong'o titled "*The Upright Revolution: Or Why Humans Walk Upright*" in numerous languages (Abrams, 2016). The initial publication of the novella was in the Kenyan language of Kikuyu, which had been a component of their March 2016 translation publication (Abrams, 2016). The novella is the most extensively translated published African-language story, having been translated into more than thirty languages, many of which are African languages (Kilolo, 2022). Among the languages into which the narrative has been translated are French, Luganda, Kiswahili, Afrikaans, Ikinyarwanda, IsiZulu, Xitsonga, and Shona (Nesbitt-Ahmed, 2017).

The African creative network of readers, writers, and publishers has evolved since the early 2000s, advances in technology have increased the diversity and accessibility of African literature production and distribution. African readers are becoming more and more the focus of both the production and consumption of African literature (Adejunmobi, 2017). In addition to the production of indigenous literature that appeals to African readers, the rapid expansion of the Internet, the broad adoption of reasonably priced mobile devices, and the growing appeal of social media platforms all contribute to the revitalisation of the reading community in many African nations (Nesbitt-Ahmed, 2017). The digital sphere has created opportunities for multilingualism and electronic media e-collections with auditory renditions and compact novels in African languages, usually at no cost (Mabweazara, 2016). The emergence of modern technology has brought about a whole new approach to connecting and engaging with the African readership, also giving writers and readers of African literature a chance to take back control of their own stories and reinterpret them (Nesbitt-Ahmed, 2017).

Platform use and access

The exchange of products and services using digital means is referred to as digital trade, either physical or digital delivery is possible for these goods and services (Francis, 2022). Simplifying digital trade to make it accessible, reasonably priced, and effective for everyone is one factor that could encourage more trade within Africa (Makumbirofa and Banya, 2023). This includes trading employing digital platforms, such as cloud computing, for searches, settlements, and logistics in e-commerce transactions. The digitalisation of trade has made it easier for nations to engage in cross-border data circulation, privacy concerns, information security, intellectual property protection, data localisation, data governance, and other aspects of business competition (Zell, 2018). As a result, countries must work towards inclusive digitalisation. Rethinking national digital frameworks and policies will be necessary for African nations to streamline digitalisation (Combrinck and Mtsatse, 2019). African nations can additionally facilitate the growth of intercontinental trade, investment, and e-commerce by establishing cybersecurity structures that encourage fair digital actions and guarantee secure and reliable internet. Fostering unrestricted data flows and establishing a uniform regulatory structure across national boundaries will facilitate the growth of current enterprises and assist newly founded e-commerce firms venturing into the digital marketplace (Yilma, 2023). This is significant to this research report as it highlights how SMME's can reach a wider market by investing more in digital mediums to distribute indigenous language literature.

Digital markets are where digital transactions happen and access to wider and more distant markets is now achievable due to the growth of digital platforms, increased global connection, and new technology (Francis, 2022). Internet-based platforms or sites that facilitate the exchange of products and services with well-established billing and shipping mechanisms are referred to as marketplaces (Mothobi *et al*, 2018). These markets have a dominant presence in 10 of the 54 nations in Africa, where 94% of all online commerce takes place, including South Africa, Kenya, and Tanzania among nations (Makumbirofa and Banya, 2023). The majority of the continent's markets solely sell within their own territory and use national channels. Due to their inaccessibility, the platforms' prospective market from other African nations is limited (Chinembiri, 2020). In relevance to South Africa and this research report, the market for book distribution is mainly focused on the trade of educational text, this is limited, however by including the distribution of trade books, specifically

Kiswahili adult fiction this may open SMME's up to more markets on the continent through trade.

The underutilisation of trade within Africa can be attributed to a number of factors, such as inadequate postal services and expensive transportation; tax limitations; foreign taxation and VAT laws; a lack of understanding of national and regional legislation; localisation policies, wherein 57% of marketplaces hinder foreign vendors; and just 28% of marketplaces providing electronic payment transactions (Makumbirofa and Banya, 2023). In order to promote digital integration and raise the likelihood that all Africans would profit from digital trade, African nations must improve Internet bandwidth and its accessibility, cost, and efficiency, this will also benefit SMME's greatly as they can participate in rights sales and have Kiswahili adult fiction published digitally on various platforms in Africa that promote and distribute indigenous language literature (Makumbirofa and Banya, 2023).

Africa free trade policy

Africa has substantial trade-related challenges including the absence of formal trade, the overreliance on exporting materials, and the decreasing conditions for trade (Obeng-Odoom, 2020). Even more difficult are non-tariff barriers like constraints on travel, both within Africa and other parts of the world. In fact, travelling within Africa is more challenging for Africans when compared to Europeans and Americans visiting the continent (Parshotam, 2018). For instance, Lesotho citizens must obtain visas in order to enter South Africa. Yet, Australian and American citizens who live on separate continents are not obligated to obtain visas to enter into South Africa. Trade is hampered by these divisions, borders, and bureaucratic handles, particularly in products and services (Aniche, 2020).

The African Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA) is the first agreement of its type to unite all 55 African nations within one Free Trade Agreement (FTA), including a focus on establishing a single marketplace for products, services, and infrastructure as well as enabling the unrestricted movement of people (Obeng-Odoom, 2020). The ACFTA was created as a result of African leaders realising that intra-African trade is severely lacking especially given the regional economic communities do not promote nor strengthen regional trade as a top priority (Parshotam, 2018). This is significant for publishing industries in South Africa and other African countries because of the popularity of the Kiswahili language, as a large

number of people speak the language and others are learning it (AU, 2012). As a result, there could be a market that consumes Kiswahili content across all genres and having small publishing houses collaborating and working with each other to distribute Kiswahili content may have the opportunity to be cost effective (Zell, 2018).

Trade agreements and policies

Financial integration is essential in global South nations; whether landlocked, or coastal economies in Africa have limited regional markets (AU, 2012). This is because of market accessibility advantages and increased trade arising from economic integration. According to the African Trade Report (2022) machines and other mechanical devices as well as printed literature make up the majority of North American imports into Africa. For instance, Africa's imports from North America rose to 4.96% to US$28.26 billion in 2021 up from 4.61% in 2020.

One factor impeding the growth of authentically national and local literature is the presence of multinational companies. Thus, questions about how local books will be published in a context where the political and financial objectives of global corporations prevail are prominent throughout Africa (ADEA, 2017). International companies enter a market in order to maximise profits, and are largely interested in operating in larger markets. This can give SMMEs the opportunity to operate in smaller markets and grow them. Small publishing houses may need to be supported in order to coordinate the distribution of Kiswahili adult fiction books, as well as increase the sustainability of this content by repeated access. For instance, small local publishers that supported independent publishing in South Africa under the apartheid era struggled to compete with the larger publishing houses and as a result, many of them were either acquired by those publishing houses or went out of business (Gromov, 2014). By lowering tariffs, eliminating non-tariff obstacles, easing trade, and enhancing border controls and customs enforcement, favourable trade agreements may have the potential to expand trade (Obeng-Odoom, 2020).

A report by Lefèvre (2016) suggests that restructuring the decentralisation of the value chain as well as the empowerment of mobile wholesalers, independent publishers, and book dealers, and the abolition of book taxes can be beneficial for small trade publishers as they can connect with other small trade publishers and circulate Kiswahili content effectively as low tariffs and easing trade will make it easier for books to circulate in the same way trade of other products like coffee or raw materials are traded.

Conclusion

In this chapter, an account of the published literature on the importance of Kiswahili fiction, its potential growth opportunities and market as well as how it can be traded inter-continentally through the view of policies and trade agreements. The literature themes that have been identified in the literature review are all relevant in analysing the data that will be collected for this research report using the methodologies in chapter 3. This literature review highlights significant aspects to consider for Kiswahili adult fiction, such as distribution channels and favourable agreements with other SMME's through policies, by understanding the goals proposed for the AU 2063 agenda for the continent. These aspects can then be narrowed down to analyse where and how South Africa fits into the AU 2063 agenda. This literature review is relevant to the research report as it identifies potential growth opportunities in various sectors that small publishes can review to expand the distribution of Kiswahili adult fiction through intra-continental trade. In the next chapter the researcher's method for collecting data will be examined in order to observe what is currently in the market and that market may be expanded.

Chapter 3: Research methods

The countries selected are relevant to the research report because they are Kiswahili speaking nations and each have bilateral agreements with South Africa (Davis, C.L, Fuchs, A, & Johnson, K. 2019) that can have an influence on the consumption of Kiswahili fiction in South Africa. By collaborating with other small publishing houses on the continent, this can stimulate intra-continental trade and see increased circulation of Kiswahili content among small publishers across the continent. For specificity, this research report aims to consider only sales of books that at present are in the market, and how Kiswahili fiction books can be distributed through intra-African trade among various publishing houses that are part of the African Books Collective.

Research on Kiswahili adult fiction is very limited as most Kiswahili literature is geared towards children and educational texts as studied by Jingo and Visser (2017) and Sabao and Nauyoma (2020) as they identify new ways to enter the educational market for Kiswahili language curriculum in Uganda and Namibia respectively. This research report will look at what are the potential growth opportunities for Kiswahili adult fiction in South Africa, by looking at what market is already prevalent and active in South Africa as well as what authors and publishing houses can do to leverage and benefit from intra-continental trade. This study will examine how commercial publishers can add to and create revenue from the distribution of Kiswahili adult fiction.

Research design

For the research design, finding an organisation that can be studied and relates to cross-border trade is important, and define the review question in order to identify potential intracontinental trade that can expand and include more local publishers. Criteria is based on small publishers that are part of the African Books Collective. In Africa there is a shortage of continental publishing organisational bodies, and the ABC is the only one of its kind that it still actively publishing content with small publishers across the continent. This is relevant to the research report in terms of promoting the distribution of Kiswahili fiction titles in South Africa. For the literature review, published works that have addressed aspects relevant to the study, such as sales and publishing data as well as how active each selected country is in their publishing sector will be reviewed. Therefore, only select studies and reports that match the review's criteria will be considered for inclusion. The next step would be to investigate

South African SMME's that have the capacity to engage in cross border trade and how they can formalise the trade of Kiswahili fiction titles that are currently being circulated.

The different information in Chapter two was chosen to be reviewed based on SMMEs that are currently active in the publishing and promotion of indigenous language. This will then further narrow down to SMME's that publish Kiswahili adult fiction, and how South African SMMEs can enter that market through the trade of books in a widely spoken language, which is Kiswahili. Further research will be conducted into what the gap in the market is and how SMME's could bridge that gap as well as sustain the market once they've entered it. In Chapter one research questions were identified, then in chapter two documentation and relevant literature was reviewed, thus the data from Nielsen Bookscan will be analysed as well as an interview and questionnaire formulated to answer the research question in this way.

Research methodology

In this work, a mixed method research methodology will be used based on the data to be collected from sources including documents and articles as well as interview. Interviews will be conducted for selected publishers that are members in the African Books Collective. ABC is a non-profit cultural organisation that promotes and disseminates African literature in the North and in Africa. They have improved the public's awareness of the vast body of African knowledge and culture as well as improving native African publishing with group effort. The collective's approach and participation in the larger trade book publishing industry are determined by the Council of Management. While remaining non-profit in its own right, ABC strives to be profitable for the benefit of its publishers. ABC is the sole outlet of its kind and offers over 3000 books produced in Africa.

Nielsen's Bookscan data will be used to review sales data in South Africa, as well as looking at any trends that have appeared over the years (e.g., over the last two decades). Although the data obtained from Nielsen's only tracks traditional print sales, this is still relevant because if there are any trends identified from the data, SMMEs may use those trends to potentially expand the Kiswahili adult fiction market. This, in turn, will help to map out the market history of Kiswahili books as well as likely future growth. This is important as it demonstrates a market where books published in South African indigenous languages can be published in a Kiswahili edition.

The main publishing houses were chosen through purposive sampling and form part of the African Books Collective, with specific reference to those with trade agreements and bi-lateral ties with South Africa. The countries of research focus include Ghana and Kenya, and the independent publishing houses that are currently members of the ABC. The Ghanaian publishing house was included in this study as they are active in publishing African literature in Kiswahili. In the event if these houses are unavailable there are back up publishing houses that are also members of the ABC that may be reached to collect data through interviews. The houses from those countries are summarised in the table below.

	Country	ABC member publishing house
1	Ghana	Afram Publications or Smartline Limited
2	Kenya	Marimba Publications or Mystery Publishers

Afram Publications

Established in 1974, Afram Publications was created as the brainchild of author and cultural activist Mrs. Efua T. Sutherland, who saw the need for an indigenous publishing business in Ghana. In Ghana, Afram Publication specialises in publishing educational resources for young children and elementary school students. The growth of local authors is the primary emphasis, particularly in children's literature. Books, adaptations into local languages, folklore, literary fiction, poetry, drama, children's literature, and other works are included in the published divisions.

Smartline Limited

An indigenous publishing firm based in Ghana, Smartline (Publishers) Ltd. is dedicated to creating and providing the best reading, teaching, and learning resources for students, educators, and institutions of learning. This includes novels and supplementary reading material. In the West African subregion, they also act as distributors for numerous foreign publishers.

Marimba Publications

Marimba Publications is based in Kenya and they mainly publish literature in Kiswahili and English. They have put out study guides for students as well as plays, novels, poetry collections, and children's picture books thus far.

Mystery publishers

A top-tier, preferred pan-African publisher that favours African genre/pop and speculative fiction. Mystery Publishers is a Kenyan-based company that publishes audiobooks, print-on-demand, and exclusively digital content.

Research instruments

This study will use a mixed method research approach. The quantitative method will include collection of data from Nielsen Bookscan, however the data collected from Nielsen Bookscan will not account for all the sales of Kiswahili fiction as there is not enough data that is formally documented. The data will be used to show what kinds of books are popular, but only account for traditional sales in print. The Nielsen's data identifies sales trends for active readership in South Africa, however, this indicates market desires and therefore this research report aims to look at other platforms and industries in the continent. Nielsen Bookscan will be used to identify how many Kiswahili adult fiction title were sold between the years 2009-2023, as well as who published them.

Questionnaires will be distributed to the publishing houses that are members of the ABC and participants will be identified, in order to establish the current distribution and market for Kiswahili adult fiction, in appendix 1. There are back up publishers for each of the countries chosen in case one is not available. Additionally, the report aims to clarify how each publishing house can contribute to a market already in existence by producing content that can foster improved intra-continental trade publishing. The first step will be to send out an email to all the publishing houses identified as well as the backup publishing houses. Then once contact has been established, the representatives will be presented with the questionnaire as well as the consent forms.

Limitations of the study

Collection of data and information from Publishers Associations in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda are challenging as the reports and surveys on reading statistics as well as sales are not generally updated periodically. Furthermore, Uganda does not have a website or platform where the necessary data can be accessed from. This lack of information limits the list of countries that can be used as a case study as there are few that document their sales and readership for Kiswahili fiction. The data from Nielsen Bookscan only tracks print sales of

traditional sales, from big publishing houses and not from smaller local publishers. To minimise the impacts of these limitations on the robustness of the study findings, other auxiliary data sources will be used. Reports by the African Union, specifically statistics on intra-continental trade will also be considered as additional source of information. Another limitation pertaining to digital reading is the use of platforms like Facebook and Wattpad that may not publish a complete book, but rather in parts or in the case of Facebook through series and without considering Facebook and Wattpad, the researcher cannot account for all the reading behaviour.

Chapter 4 Results and discussion

In this chapter, data collected from each of the representatives from three publishing houses is presented and discussed. The representatives chosen for this research report were selected through purposive sampling owing to their membership in ABC association. Original study design was envisaged to collect data through conducting oral interviews via online from representatives from various organizations. During data collection phase, however, only one representative agreed to an interview, and two responded by filling up the questionnaire. Therefore, herein the obtained responses are presented and discussed. In addition, sales data from Nielsen Bookscan for Kiswahili titles in South Africa are analysed, and discussed in relation to the promotion of publishing houses in Africa, and likely demand for Kiswahili literature in South Africa.

Data collection

Emails were sent to every publishing house member identified in Table 1 presented in Chapter 3. Starting with Ghana, only Afram Publications were available to participate in this research report. Smartline Publications was one of the publishing houses identified but have shifted their focus to educational publishing and no longer publish Kiswahili adult fiction titles. In Kenya two new participants from different publishing houses were identified. Data received from Kenya was from the Hekaya Arts Initiative, which actively collaborates with ABC members but was not a member at the time of data collection phase. The second house was Zand Graphics, formerly a member of the ABC.

Overall, adequate data was collected from one of the four original publishing houses that are members of the ABC and two new entries from Kenya that are non-members. Their non-membership was plausibly for a two-fold reason. First, associated to shift of focus mainly to the publication of educational text books for children and secondary schools. Secondly, the publishing house has folded as a business, and therefore, has been inactive for extended period.

Results and discussion

All publishers were emailed a questionnaire with 8 main questions. Here, the results from the interview and questionnaire responses are presented as aggregated answers. Answers from questionnaire responses were combined by those obtained from an interview with Afram Publications representative. This is in order to present the answers as varied and not one

dimensional. The first question was on trade agreements and whether or not the respective publishers have already engaged in co-publishing agreements. Analysis of the responses suggested that publishers where open to the idea of co-publishing with other SMME's, but that there is some sense of gatekeeping in the industry, particularly when engaging with other African countries. Certain elements including ownership and publication in African languages, in the workforce, and a significant power dynamic within value chains are acknowledged as gatekeeping across Africa (Jjingo and Bakize, 2022). And the results in this study show an agreement to this earlier observation. Lastly, the quantitative data obtained from Nielsen Bookscan sales data is analysed.

Results of quantitative data

Data was sourced from Nielsens Bookscan show that between 2009 – 2023 a total of 25 Kiswahili titles were sold in South Africa. Data collected also indicates which publishing houses published, sold and distributed the titles in South Africa as well as type of content sold over this period. There were a total Kiswahili titles published between 2009-2023 were 25 titles. The major publishers were CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform (CIPP) with 6 titles, East African Educational Publishers (EASP) with 3 titles with Shuter and Shooter (S&S) and Mkuki na Nyota (MNN) each having 2 titles, and the others each having 1 title (Figure 1).

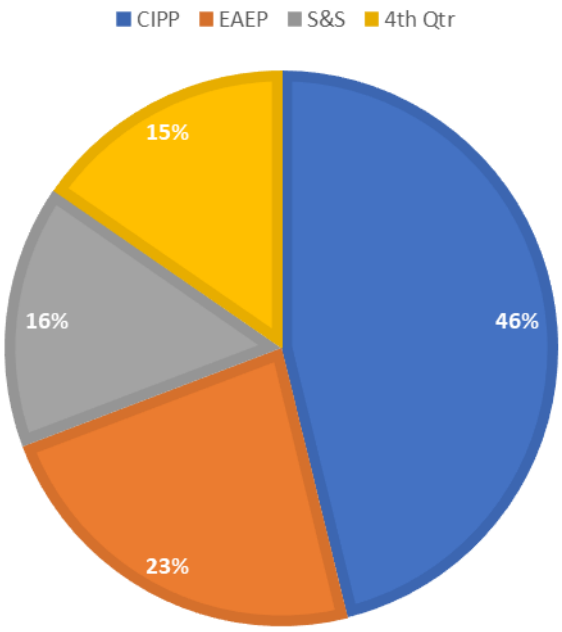


Figure 1: Distribution of sales by the publishers Nielsens Bookscan data (n = 25). Abbreviations are: CIPP: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, EAEP: East African

Educational Publishers, S&S: Shuter and Shooter, MNN: Mkuki na Nyota and other consists of X publishers.

One notable observation was that the Bible Society published one title, but had the largest number of books (about 86%) of the total sold titles over this period. Overall, data show sales were low for Kiswahili titles, and particularly for adult fiction sales (6%), with children's literature and religious text taking up preference for sales at 30% and 34 %, respectively.

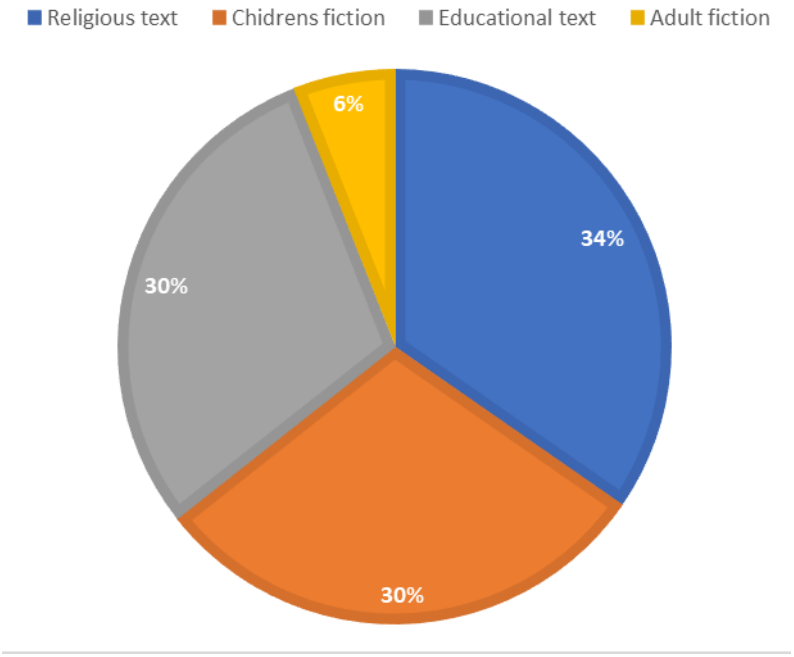


Figure 2: Distribution of content in genre based on Nielsens Bookscan data (n = 25).

Analysis of data for the publishers show that the genre with the most publication is religious text (of the 424 of the 491 books sold), followed by children's fiction, educational text and then adult fiction as the least published genre (Figure 2). These sales only show data for formal book trade, and do not account for informal book trade sales. Religious text has the most sales, and could indicate the significant market segment of readers falls in as well as affordability and accessibility, for example, as indicated by low price of under R 90,00 per copy, as indicated on the data from Nielsens Bookscan. This is significant as the respondent participants in the research indicates they receive more readership in educational publishing and children's fiction. For example, in reference to Afram Publications they maintained "We produce children's textbooks and set books,". Adult fiction publishing is also an area of

focus, but is not as strong as other genres that have a large readership based on the Nielsens Bookscan data. Other categories that are competing with both adult and children fiction titles include school textbooks and religious text. By making books traded between small publishing houses, the high price per piece show that the pricing should be considered in an endeavour to reach a large audience .

Cross-border rights sales

Publishers on the continent are eager to engage in cross border trade. However, they are yet to actualise this goal. This can be due to bad experiences that have made publishers wary, for instance, in the case of Afram publishers where they responded thus: "when looking at the documentation of how that went, it didn't go very well*"*. The case in point was that they had sold rights sales to a publishing house in Nigeria, only for the collaboration to end up being a negative experience for Afram Publication, further adding "And as of now we haven't thought to exchange rights as we've gotten our fingers burnt"

This and other adverse experiences speak to the lack of regulation, and the legitimacy of publishing houses in this market segment, in addition to lack of local standards governing such transactions. Following their experience and to fill-up some of these deficiencies, Afram Publications addressed the issue of copyright infringement and had a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Copyright Office of Ghana, in cooperation with other publishing industry partners. The reason was to keep an eye on the actions of pirates determined to rob copyright owners of the proceeds that are due for their creations.

Market research and reader feedback

The outstanding observation from the responses is that these publishers are engaged in indigenous language publishing, even though their Kiswahili adult fiction content is limited; yet, they still participate in market research in order to cater for their readership market. Hekaya Arts Initiative, which publishes Kiswahili literature, stated "over time I realised that my readers were out for something different and this is how I discovered people love literature in Kiswahili and this has become my biggest market". This is an aspect local SMME's in South Africa can participate in, for example, by engaging with their readers and conducting targeted market research. To this end, social media can be a beneficial tool in

reaching the publishers' readers for feedback. Example of such tools are BookTok and Bookstagram.

Market research is also explored and expanded on at Afram Publications as they shared that "we have conducted some research to gain comprehensive insight into the specific needs and interest of our distinct readers. We've also looked at the demographics of the readers in the target market that we serve, and our engagement with our readers goes beyond traditional methods". The use of surveys, focus groups, and data analysis can also be beneficial to SMME's as they learn what their readers are interested and curate content that seeks to meet the readers' needs.

Publishing associations

A publishing association purpose is to safeguard, advance, and increase public knowledge of publishing within the framework of political, cultural, and economic advancement. The African Books Collective is the publishing association that was the focus of this research report, Afram Publications is currently a member, Hekaya Initiative works with members of the collective and Zand Publications is a former member of the collective. There is value in association and collaboration, specifically having a collective platform where all the literature produced and published by various countries can be accessed at once, like the ABC. Small publishing houses that are starting out may not have the networks to be part of numerous publishing associations.

Readership currently active in South Africa

One of the objectives of this research report was to investigate how small publishing houses can contribute to a market already in existence by producing content that can be exported and imported. In reference to the first research question, through Nielsens Bookscan data it notable that the current readership for Kiswahili fiction in South Africa is low, however with data form Polzer Ngwato *et al*, (2023) that there is keen interest in adults that would like to read and have the capability to read in indigenous languages. It is also important to note that informal sales of Kiswahili adult fiction cannot be obtained, and what is available is very limited data as only formal sales are tracked in South Africa. There is also not much market research done in South Africa to track what the current readership is. This suggests that there is a gap in the market that small publishers can bridge in order to reach a larger audience, that

have not yet been accommodated by larger publishing houses, through market research and reader feedback.

Authorship and publishing activities

Inter-continental trade can foster authorship and publishing activities through book fairs, networking and collaboration with other partners in the industry. As a publisher from Afram Publications stated “The exposure and expense of going to book fairs is worth it, as well as we have sponsors, we get to interact with people in the industry. Although, an online attendance has its own benefit, but at the same time you could miss out on other things like the physical networking aspect.” This statement was in reference to attending the Frankfurt Invitation Program for Publishers. With policy and trade agreements, governments can offer support resources to make sure that SMME’s are supported.

The African Union suggests that a focus on establishing a single marketplace for products, services, and infrastructure as well as enabling the unrestricted movement of people, will be beneficial for the growth of African economies . This is relevant to the topic of attending book fairs, as mentioned by a participant from Zand Graphics “The costs are exorbitant in relation to potential sales during and after the fair”. This can provide an opportunity for the AU Agenda 2063, with focus on African Renaissance where they can accept funding and donations that allows SMME’s to attend book fairs, specifically on the continent . This fund would also be beneficial in keeping publishing houses form shifting focus to educational publishing, by providing support for indigenous language publishing, the objectives of the African Renaissance can be achieved through the preservation of indigenous literature for adults as well as cultural artefacts.

The publishing industry, and especially the trade of copyright-related rights (such as audio, translation, and electronic rights) is reliant on relationships. Every year, publishing houses, presses, authors, and other influential people in the publishing industry gather at international book fairs to discuss publishing-related topics and to sign book deals. Some international book fairs that SMME’s could benefit from and are African Book Fairs are, Cairo International Book Fair, Foire Internationale du Livre de Tunis, Nigeria International Book Fair, Franshoek Literary Festival and Ghana International Book Fair. Through these fairs, sustainable relationships and partnerships between SMME’s could be cultivated.

Growth opportunities

The sales data from Nielsens Bookscan shows that the Kiswahili titles sold were in print, either in paperback or hardback format, suggesting that print is still the preferred reading format of choice in South Africa. Sales data collected in an industry report by Le Roux *et al* (2022, pp 6-7) supports that locally published digital adult fiction was significant between the years 2020/21 and 2021/22, respectively, this suggests that there is a potential market for indigenous adult fiction literature that can be distributed digitally.

One of the main aims for the Agenda 2063 is to ensure that more digital reading platforms are developed that are accessible and affordable to adults (African Union page 150, 2015). As stated in a report by the NRS (2023), most digital reading takes place on small screens with 84% of adults using smartphones to access their literature and mobile phones are perhaps the most promising foundation for novel ideas to book distribution on the continent (Kilolo, 2022). This suggests that SMME's can create and publish content in formats that are available to be read on a mobile platform, like a seies publication on Facebook where shot stories in indigenous languages can be posted and then the longer novels can be accessed on a different platform like Libi to ensure that the literature is available as a complete book. With the example of Okadabooks given in chapter two, there are various SMME's across the continent that have branched out to digital publishing platforms, through smartphones.

While conducting the research and collecting data form the various publishing house, there seems to be a lot of shifts in focus by many of them to educational publishing, and when looking further for adult Kiswahili fiction, there is more self-published content than there is by SMME's. This is similar to South Africa in that there is limited publication of adult fiction by SMME's. this research report addresses the need and benefit of SMME's to collaborate in the publishing and distribution of Kiswahili adult fiction.

In summary this chapter has outlined quantitative and qualitative information on Kiswahili adult fiction status in Africa. Here, we summarized data on the sales of Kiswahili literature in South Africa between 2009 and 2023 by Nielsen Bookscan. The religious-related literature was the most dominant possibly due to its popularity, accessibility and affordability. Moreover, qualitative data was found to be agreement with earlier literature as outlined in Chapter Two.

Chapter 5 Concluding remarks and recommendations

Using the findings from the data analysis in Chapter Four, the key research findings and recommendations are outlined in this chapter. As stated in the problem statement, the challenge is not a lack of readership or a market for Kiswahili adult fiction, but rather the limited access and availability to Kiswahili adult fiction books. The aim of this research report was to establish if there is a way in which SMME'S could benefit from intercontinental trade, through the publishing of Kiswahili adult fiction. Digital platforms that currently offer indigenous adult fiction in South Africa has been reviewed as well, in terms of accessibility and affordability as per the goal of the AU 2063 agenda. The sales of Swahili literature over the years will be examined using information from the Nielsen Bookscan. The collected data from Nielsen Bookscan has assisted in identifying trends and establishing a timeline of Kiswahili fiction trade sales. Such insights are valuable in order to replicate such sales and particularly in expanding future market base. The interview questions will be posed to publishers that are currently members of the ABC, these publishers were identified as they currently publish Kiswahili adult fiction.

In this work, factors and potential growth opportunities were reviewed, and indicated that rights sales present opportunities for small publishers to enter the niche market in the South African context, whilst catering for the potential intra-African trade. They can also facilitate an option of print on demand, where titles can be printed from any region in the continent, without having to incur import and export costs. This, in turn, can support small publishers to develop an extensive title list for Kiswahili adult fiction as well as significant collaborations among the SMMEs, and therefore, render them a position to compete with larger publishing houses. Through a collaborative effort between SMME's there is potential to establish a distribution channel that can support repeated access to Kiswahili adult fiction, this can be possible with mobile accessible platforms. Publishing collaboratives like Ankara Press and Jalada Collective were able to produce and distribute adult fiction content in a multilingual project in order to appeal to speakers of various languages. This can be adopted by South African SMME's through platforms such as Fundza Mobi and Libi which are local mobile platforms that offer free adult fiction in indigenous languages. Through a collaborative project Fundza Mobi and Libi could achieve similar results to the endeavours of Ankara Press and Jalada Collective.

After reviewing the literature on the plans for policy and trade agreements (in Chapter Two) this information shows an opportunity for SMME's to take advantage of the gap in indigenous language publishing – given the potential large market size in the African continent. SMME's like Afram Publications, Cassava Republic and Ankara Press have identified what their market and readership is in their respective counties as well as what format their readers are most interested in reading. These SMME's can serve as model examples of how small publishing houses working in collaboration can grow a market that at present is being overlooked by larger publishing houses. The ABC is also another example of how inter-continental trade is possible, and a possible avenue that can sustain itself and grow into other markets and regions. In addition, in this research report quantitative sales data in South Africa indicated that Kiswahili adult fiction were low as opposed to that of religious-related literature with the later accounting for about 86% of all copies sold over the period considered (Nielsen Bookscan, 2023). This was associated with the latter's popularity, accessibility, and affordability. This implies, SMME's should consider cost per piece, and in addition consider publishing titles of other faiths.

Recommendations

Recommendations for further studies is inclusive of both government support as well as small publishing houses in South Africa. As opposed to getting funding from the government, it would be beneficial and more realistic, if funding could be sourced from organisations such as UNESCO; Global Alliance for Literacy and the African Union as part of the African Renaissance then self-publishers and SMME's will have opportunity to publish using those resources. For data collection, the sampling would have to be broadened to include more countries with a strong publishing industry, particularly east African countries. Qualitative studies through interviews to get more in-depth answers from selected publishing houses, as questionaries might be limiting and not clear enough. Finally, this study can be expanded to include other Kiswahili speaking countries, like Tanzania, which was mentioned by a publisher at Hekaya Arts Initiative as a country they collaborate often with.

Rwanda, Uganda and Ethiopia are also Kiswahili speaking nations where this research can be further expanded to. Including indigenous languages other than Kiswahili, in particular South Africa shares indigenous languages with its neighbours, namely Botswana, Namibia and Lesotho. SMME's can establish rights sales and distribute adult fiction in the common indigenous languages that they share. Particularly to this study, countries where Kiswahili is

the official language, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. Rights sales should be focus for SMME's, particularly in co-publishing, print on demand which is facilitated by Amazon, can make it possible for a small publishing house to print a copy of a book published from Kenya and distribute it in South Africa.

Digital platforms like Uwaridi can be seen as an example of a digital platform that adult readers access Kiswahili fiction as well as what content they are drawn to, the app is a preferred and popular platform in Kenya and Tanzania. By widening the market for adult Kiswahili fiction, it would make it more financially feasible to reach an audience that may not have access to new or old print books, as publishing houses are reluctant to publish Kiswahili fiction for a fear that it may not do as well as educational publishing. Digital platforms can be used to gauge the market and demand for Kiswahili fiction and how small publishers can find a way to bridge the gap between new Kiswahili content and readers that are across the continent. In south Africa the preferred reading platforms and here people can access adult fiction in indigenous languages are Facebook and Wattpad, as discussed in chapter 2, platform use and access.

While conducting the research and collecting data form the various publishing house, there seems to be a lot of shifts in focus by many of them to educational publishing, and when looking further for adult Kiswahili fiction, there is more self-published content than there is by SMME's. This is similar to South Africa in that there is limited publication of adult fiction by SMME's. This research report addresses the need and benefit of SMME's to collaborate in the publishing and distribution of Kiswahili adult fiction.

As an outcome of this research there needs to be more interrogation of the kind of information that is tracked for indigenous language publishing. There should also be more focus on how readers are reached. Afram Publications is a good example of an SMME that conducts market research in order to engage with their readers and cater to their reading preferences. South African SMME's can reach out to their readers and ask them to provide feedback and then act on that feedback.

The print distribution in South Africa is one dimensional, which makes it harder to reach the reader, this further explains that audiences across the diaspora are different, but the readers do have need for indigenous, representative and reflective stories. Local publishers can use this

to their benefit and instead of having to produce and publish multiple titles in one country for Kiswahili adult fiction, they can instead co-publish with each other, thus leading to a rights trade.

Appendix 1
Questions presented

1. Have there been any discussions of trade agreements with South African independent publishers in order to co-publish books?

2. Has your publishing house ever had any rights sold to local publishers in South Africa to publish a book?

3. What experience have you had with your specific reading market that has given you a sense of what your readers are interested in reading?

4. What are your observations on trends in Kiswahili fiction for adults in your country?

5. Is there any government or policy support that you receive to expand on cross border trade?

6. What book fairs have you participated in and are there any that you plan to attend?

7. How large is your focus on promoting cross-border sales and in which sectors are you most keen?

8. Are you currently a member of an association other than the ABC

Appendix 2
Raw Data

Hekaya Arts Initiative

1) *None that I know of. Book publishing in the continent is an affair that has a lot of gatekeeping even when such agreements can do us so much good.*

2) *None as of yet*

3) *I started off selling books by African authors, then over time I realised that my readers were out for something different. This is how I discovered people love literature in Kiswahili and this has become my biggest market.*

4) *This is on the rise and I've now concentrated on selling Kiswahili literature. There is a keen sense of decolonizing literature and readers are going back to reading Kiswahili books, a right we were denied while growing up as a school in Kenya readied us for professional lives informed and defined by the English language!*

5) *None. None at all. I doubt this will happen soon, in Kenya at least!*

6) *I have attended Heroe Book Fair as it was held in Mombasa. I haven't attended the ones held in Nairobi as I feel they may not expose me to the kind of audience I target.*

7) *I have been dealing a whole lot with Tanzania and I purchase most of the contemporary works form them. For me this is an avenue I believe holds a lot of promise and I'd be more comfortable attending and participating in book fairs in Tanzania and Zanzibar.*

8) *No. I am also not a member of ABC but it's a collective I work with and have even had talks on reaching my audience in the West through.*

Zand Graphics

1) *No, but would love to do so.*

2) *No, we haven't.*
3) *We publish a range of books mainly for progressive, historical, feminist, political and non-binary segments.*
4) *Very limited reading of Kiswahili fiction by adults in Kenya.*
5) *No.*
6) *Just one or two. The costs are exorbitant in relation to potential sales during and after the fair.*
7) *Very large and would like to establish contacts to do so. Main focus would be on progressive themes of Pan - African thinking and related topics.*
8) *No.*

Afram Publications

1) *None so far, but there are plans to explore and expand to other countries, but as of now we have not yet taken initiative. However, after a book fair we attended in Germany, after interacting and at the fair we realised that there is a lot of collaboration in the industry as well as publishing in other languages.*

2) *Yes, we've had some exchange of rights with Nigeria in the past, but when looking at the documentation of how that went, it didn't go very well. And as of now we haven't thought to exchange rights as we've gotten our fingers burnt, so we're not in a hurry to act on any rights sales at the moment.*

3) *Yes, we have conducted some research to understand what our market wants, we've used surveys, focus groups and data analysis to gain comprehensive insight into the specific needs and interest of our distinct readers. We've also looked at the demographics of the readers in the target market that we serve, and our engagement with our readers goes beyond traditional methods. We also incorporated data platforms to also get a sense of what our readers want, as part of our commitment in delivering high quality content makes us sustain our relationships and collaboration with our authors. This results in unique products, or rather books to sell on the market, so we do a lot on that as well as receiving market feedback and conducting market research, we know what our market wants and so were able to deliver that.*

4) *So, in my years in publishing, I'm unsure if there's any Ghanian that reads Kiswahili, I haven't seen much of that here, but there is a lot of English, French and local languages. But at book events there are books sold in Kiswahili are mostly for children and not so much adult fiction.*
5) *Yes, there are facilities that provide support, such as the ministry of education, ministry of tourism, and some venture capitalists but at Afram, we have not sourced for that as yet. These facilities promote reading and reading culture, and its is easy and accessible to apply for them.*

6) *Yes, so we've participated in the Ghana international book fairs, we've done the Nigerian international book far and recently we attended the Frankfort Invitation Program for Publishers, these are the major ones we've attended. The exposure and expense of going to book fairs is worth it, as well as we have sponsors, we get to interact with people in the industry. Although, an online attendance has its own benefit, but at the same time you could miss out on other things like the physical networking aspect.*

7) *Currently our focus is large and we are currently looking at translation and localisation considering on translating books into multiple languages to make sure that our books are accessible to a broader audience. We are looking at international distribution partners, people who can distribute our books in other countries, we're also looking at how to enhance our digital platforms currently. As well as more participation in book fairs, as well as collaboration with international authors. We produce children's textbooks and set books, although now were looking at merchandising, to enhance our book sales, so we've started doing things like a book stroll, looking at puzzles and looking into things that will create excitement around a book, especially for our children's books.*

8) *Yes, we are currently part of ABC, as well as Ghana Publishers Association, African Publishers Network and the International Publishers Association.*

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PROJECT TITLE Kiswahili adult fiction publishing in South Africa: SMME's contribution and benefits

INVESTIGATOR Chelsea Musee

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT SLLM/Publishing Studies

DATE CONSIDERED 26 January 2024

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE Approved

RISK LEVEL Minimal risk

EXPIRY DATE 26 January 2025

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE 30 January 2024 **CHAIRPERSON** Prof. Anette Horn

A. Horn

cc: Supervisor : Laetitia Cassells

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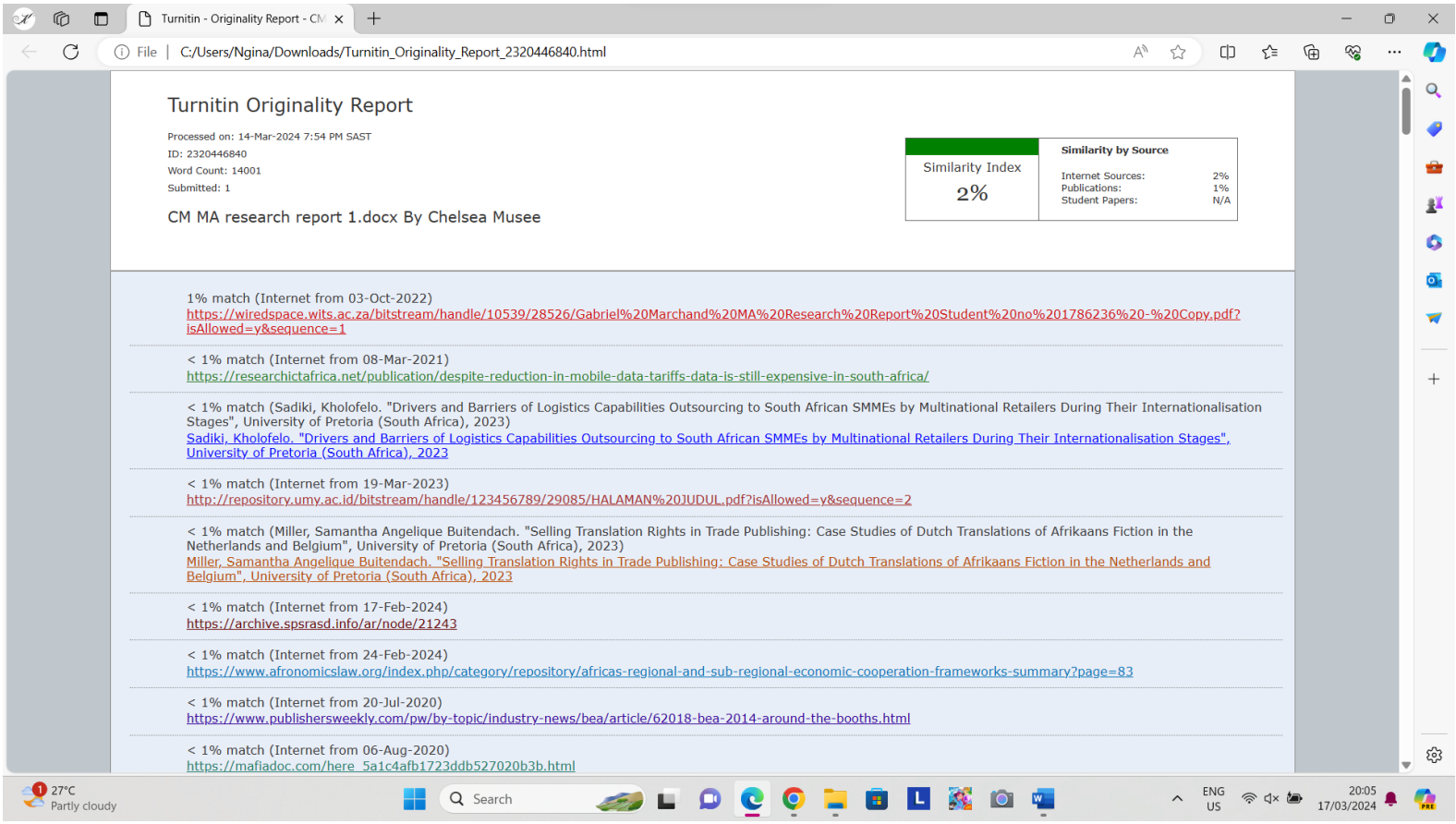
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