



DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED IT IT FACULTY

Encouraging Reading on Social Media

Exploring Finnish Bookstagram Community

Susanna Kokko

Essay/Thesis:	30 hp
Programme:	Master in Communication
Level:	Second Cycle
Year:	2023
Supervisor:	Charu Uppal
Examiner:	Davide Girardelli, Lexin Lin
Report no:	2023:082
Word count:	10 986

Abstract

In the contemporary digital age, where text-based communication is increasingly significant, literacy skills play a crucial role in effective social participation. However, despite the importance of literacy, a considerable number of people are still illiterate. Today's digitalization is a new challenge for enhancing literacy rates as technology and social media have been shown to disrupt reading habits and disturb cognitive and intellectual development. Nevertheless, social media has given rise to book communities that remain understudied. Thus, this study aimed to investigate the possible use of social media for promoting reading. To achieve this aim, a qualitative approach was adopted, and Finnish bookstagrammers were interviewed on the factors that motivate them to join Bookstagram and how participation in Bookstagram perceivably affects their reading habits. The findings indicate that the main motivations to join the Finnish Bookstagram community are various possibilities for socialization, Instagram's affordances for content creation and bookish interests such as finding reading tips and creating a new dimension to a beloved hobby. Additionally, the findings suggest that participating in the Bookstagram potentially increases reading amount, inspires more diverse reading, increases reading engagement through shared reading and increases reading motivation. However, exposure to other people's content was found potentially increase the pressure to read more and lead to negative experiences regarding comparison. Overall, the findings underline the potential of Bookstagram in promoting reading and enhancing literacy, highlighting the need to view social media as a tool for encouraging reading rather than a hindrance.

Keywords: social media, Bookstagram, reading, literacy, reading promotion

Acknowledgements

Reading is one of the most important skills for today's society, yet recently reading skills have declined globally. For this reason, I wanted to study the possibilities social media can provide in enhancing reading. This study could not have been done without support from professors and peers, my work colleagues, friends, and family or without the Finnish bookstagrammers, who were excited to share their stories with me.

Therefore, I would first like to thank the staff members of the Department of Applied Information Technology at the University of Gothenburg, who have patiently been teaching us about communication studies. Second, I want to express my gratitude to my team and colleagues at the company I am working at, as they have been flexible and understanding regarding the difficulties of having to work and study at the same time.

My friends have been invaluable support throughout my studies and the creation of this thesis. I want to thank you for sharing my happiness and frustration, joy and disappointment. I especially want to thank Saara, who wrote her thesis in Finland at the same time and with whom I was able to brainstorm different ideas. Thank you to Isabelle, Sara, and Nimol as well for sharing the struggles and knowledge and sitting with me at the library hour after hour, day after day. I also want to thank my family, who supported me during my studies and helped me move to Sweden.

Finally, a special thank you to Finnish Bookstagram community and to the bookstagrammers who were interested in participating in this study and who understood the value of my research. This study could not have been conducted without your valuable contribution. Kiitos!

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Literature Review	5
The Value of Books	5
Importance of Reading	7
Cognitive Benefits	7
Intellectual Benefits	8
Promoting Reading	9
Promotion Strategies	9
Shared Reading	10
Books and Reading in Digital Age.....	11
Digitalization of Books.....	11
The Effects of eBooks	12
SNS Book Communities.....	14
Transfer from Offline to Online.....	14
Social Media’s Literary Sub-Communities	15
Reading and Books on Instagram.....	16
Instagram as a Social Media Platform	16
Bookstagram: Instagram’s Book Community	17

Purpose of the Current Study.....	18
Methods	20
Research Design.....	20
Sampling	21
Participation Criteria	21
Sample Size	22
Data Collection	24
Recruiting.....	24
Semi-Structured Interviews.....	25
Data Analysis.....	27
Ethical Considerations	28
Ethics for Interviewing	28
Ethics for Translations.....	29
Findings	31
Motivations to Join Bookstagram	31
Sociality.....	31
Instagram’s Affordances.....	32
Bookish Interests.....	33
Perceived Effects on Reading Habits.....	34
Reading Motivation and Reading Amount	34

Reading Diversity	35
Book Engagement Through Shared Reading	35
Discussion.....	37
Motivations to Join Bookstagram	37
Perceived Effects of Participation on Reading Habits	38
Practical implications	41
Limitations	42
Conclusion and Future Research	44
References.....	46

Introduction

In modern world, even basic survival requires literacy, an ability to understand and apply versatile writing and reading skills (Valtin et al., 2016). From everyday life to occupational success, literacy is a fundamental requirement for people of all ages in societies dominated by the written word, like European countries (European Commission, 2012). Yet, approximately 73 million European adults are illiterate (Cree et al., 2012). Concerns about decreasing literacy have been raised even in Finland, where children and adolescents generally have significant reading skills, ranking in the top three in the PISA 2018 reading literacy test (OECD, 2019). Despite the high rate, the score has been in steady decline, as the mean score of the reading literacy test has declined by six points compared to the PISA 2015 and 26 points compared to the PISA 2000. In addition, according to the test, every fourth student had difficulties in basic aspects of reading, for example, in identifying text's main idea or making connections in pieces of information from different sources.

The PISA results are similar to research on Finnish adults' reading literacy skills conducted by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture in 2012 (Malin et al., 2013). The results show that even though Finnish adult's reading skills are one of the best in world, the standard deviation is large, signalling that there is a relative number of adults whose reading literacy skills are poor. Poor literacy has numerous negative effects, including limited opportunities for societal participation (Rintaningrum, 2009), reduced access to education, and lack of opportunities for creating wealth and maintaining good health (European Commission, 2012).

While literacy has become increasingly important, reading levels have stagnated, creating concern, as without reading, there can be no literacy (European Commission, 2012).

Furthermore, in today's digital society, reading faces additional challenges due to the dominance of social media. Research has shown that social media can be a major distraction that negatively impacts academic performance among students (Kojo et al., 2018), and it can impede concentration and lead to procrastination on academic assignments (Ngwoke et al., 2022).

Reading can be developed through practice, as reading promotes further reading (Krashen, 1993). However, the challenge lies in motivating people to read more to improve their reading skills. The most important factor in promoting reading is visibility (European Commission, 2012; Kurschus, 2015), meaning that reading and books need to be prominent in society, schools, and families as it inspires people to increase the amount of reading (Kurschus, 2015). While social media has been blamed for distraction, technology can also be utilized to make reading visible and even promote it, as evidenced by "Oprah's Book Club", a TV show phenomenon in which people across America began reading books to participate in discussions about the books chosen by Oprah Winfrey (Fister, 2005; Fuller & Sedo, 2013; Striphas, 2009). Especially the internet can be an asset for promoting reading and literacy of its versatility, but the book industry must continue to adapt to the digital age to fully utilize its potential (Kurschus, 2015).

Though books need to be more adapted to the digital age, some book communities can already be found online. A "bookternet" is a term used to refer to international, online book-based communities which exist across a variety of platforms, ranging from older media like Tumblr and Pinterest to new media such as Instagram (Martens et al., 2022). The adaptation of books to the digital environment is a notable development; however, the negative impact of social media on reading raises an important question: can social media book-based communities be used for positively promoting reading and literacy? Murray

(2018) explains that by joining different book-based online communities, readers can share their book preferences, build connections with like-minded peers, and find new books based on members' previous reviews. Moreover, communication about books has also been shown to promote reading and literacy by motivating people to read, for example, through peer pressure, as people's reading choices are often influenced by others (Krashen, 1993).

While several studies have explored the impact of social media on reading habits in academic settings (e.g., Hassan et al., 2021; Kojo et al., 2018; Rafiq et al., 2019), only a few research has examined the relationship between social media and leisure reading. Birke et al. (2021) discovered that social media increases performative reading, which refers to reading for the sake of reading for quantification of reading in online book communities. Performative reading can be a cause for concern, as it raises questions about the value of reading beyond its performative aspect. Thomas (2021) also points out that social media leads to the formation of a "bookish" lifestyle, in which individuals are "fetishizing not just of the books, but of an associated aspirational lifestyle" (p. 9). Bookish lifestyle can be seen as a positive aspect if it encourages individuals to read more and engage in intellectual conversations with others. However, it might also be considered a concern if it causes materialism and consumerism, where individuals are more concerned with collecting and displaying books as status symbols instead of reading and engaging with them.

Despite studies on social media book communities, it remains unclear why people join these communities. Furthermore, whether these groups impact the reading habits of their members is not fully understood. To address this gap, this research explores the Finnish Bookstagram community, a literary sub-culture on Instagram, to investigate its impact on reading habits and the motivations behind joining this community.

By examining the factors that drive people to join Bookstagram communities and how participation perceivably affects reading habits, this study intends to provide valuable insights into the role of social media in promoting reading. The findings of this research shed light on the potential of social media as a tool for enhancing literacy and add to the previous research on social media book communities by addressing the participants' views and experiences in the form of semi-structured in-depth interviews.

Literature Review

The Value of Books

Printed books are deeply embedded into the culture of all literate societies (Murray, 2021). They are often seen as wallpaper or evidence of human existence, making it challenging to see books as information technology, but printed books are, in fact, the oldest form of information technology. Being developed from ancient papyrus scrolls via Gutenberg's printing press and finally reaching modern digital revolution's Adobe Acrobat's pdf format and eBooks, books have had significant influence on societal, cultural, and individual development of people (Kurschus, 2015; Murray, 2021). With the printing press's development, knowledge democratisation progressed rapidly in Europe (Kurschus, 2015), and in the Enlightenment age in the late 17th century, print texts catalysed people's self-conception (Murray, 2021). With the rise of Protestant Christianity, the concept of individuality spread, creating the foundation for modern European societies: democratic theory and capitalist economics. Hence, books and reading have formed the base of many modern European societies.

Printed books embody the historical period they were written in and an agent of change in the period and afterwards (Murray, 2021). They hold greater cultural prestige than verbal reports of oral culture. However, books do not only recount history but also make it since books' and society's dynamic is symbiotic. Historically, books have influenced, for example, class mobility and liberation of gender and race oppression for individuals and groups (Fuller & Sedo, 2013). They have formed and developed national identities and are the keepers of national identity and culture (Kurschus, 2015). Books also form a culture, which is hard to define due to its complexity and ever-developing nature. In short, book

culture is a blend of individual national and media cultures, representing the time when the culture exists and differing from nation to nation. It brings about new forms of communication and materiality, and books, manuscripts, and other related media are relevant to book culture regarding vernacular literacy and communication (Anttonen et al., 2018).

The value of books derives from literacy since literacy is a skill which enables societal and individual development (Murray, 2021). Literacy skills are vital for societal participation, recognition, and countering of misinformation and for interpreting, reflecting and understanding texts (Rintaningrum, 2009). Literacy has many definitions, and it is hard to pinpoint one which could cover the entire concept of literacy, especially when taking disabilities and digitalization's required new skills into consideration (Keefe & Copeland, 2011). The definition of literacy is ever-changing, moulding itself fitting to the time it is defined in. In 2016, European Literacy Policy Network published a European Declaration of the Rights to Literacy, by which literacy is "the ability to read and write at a level whereby individuals can effectively understand and use written communication in all media (print or electronic), including digital literacy" (Valtin et al., 2016 p. 3), which is the definition this study refers to.

On the other hand, reading involves understanding the relationship between individual letters or symbols on a page, which combine to form abstract words (Lyon, 1998). These words are then translated into corresponding sounds and meanings, creating the act of reading. Therefore, before people can become literate, they must first learn to read, as literacy can only be acquired through reading (Krashen, 1993).

Importance of Reading

Cognitive Benefits

Reading's benefits are vast, as it has multiple benefits for individuals and society (Bus et al., 1995). It is not just about processing words on a page but also involves developing various cognitive skills, including critical thinking, spelling, and reading comprehension (Bus et al., 1995; Krashen, 1993). It can develop vocabulary and communication (Bus et al., 1995) as well as increase knowledge (Fuller & Sedo, 2013), emotional understanding and even mental health (Mar et al., 2006).

Reading has also been shown to enhance interpretation of text, recognition of irony and allusion, use nuanced language and attention to detail, understanding of metaphors, identification of similarities and patterns, and the ability to understand different perspectives (Phelan, 2021). These skills help readers develop different senses of understanding, including understanding meaning, organizing data, applying knowledge, exercising a skill, and forming coherent interpretations.

Long-term exposure, specifically to fiction, has been found to positively impact social cognition and emotional intelligence by enhancing empathy and social skills (Mar et al., 2006). Through reading fiction, individuals can better understand others by recognizing similarities between themselves and others, which has been shown to reduce racial boundaries, diminish prejudiced perceptions (Johnson et al., 2014), and promote cross-cultural understanding (Fuller & Sedo, 2013). Additionally, reading can lead to better interpersonal understanding (Djikic et al., 2009; Phelan, 2021).

The cognitive skills developed through reading have been shown to reduce the risk of dementia and have overall health benefits (Yates et al., 2016). Engaging in cognitively stimulating activities, such as reading, is thereby important for individual health.

Intellectual Benefits

Reading is closely associated with moral development and assessment (Fuller & Sedo, 2013; Phelan, 2021). Additionally, reading has been found to foster several intellectual virtues, such as autonomy, curiosity, and self-reflectiveness, among others (Phelan, 2021). These virtues equip individuals to evaluate moral concepts, themes, and character portrayals and engage in moral reasoning. Moreover, reading has been shown to reduce dogmatism, lack of thoroughness, hasty generalizations, and wishful thinking. Reading has also been shown to positively affect academic performance and skills (Krashen, 1993; Scott & Saaiman, 2016; Sullivan & Brown, 2015). This is supported by a study by Kojo et al. (2018), who found that even short reading periods can positively influence general academic performance.

In today's information-driven society, where knowledge is critical for success, reading has the potential to create wealth and foster competitiveness through literacy (Kurschus, 2015). On the other hand, illiteracy can have negative consequences in many areas of life, including limiting a person's ability to access, understand, and apply written messages, which are essential for societal and digital participation and occupational development (Cree et al., 2012; European Commission, 2012).

Society is responsible for promoting reading and literacy skills, as they are closely linked to a culture of reading (Fuller & Sedo, 2013). Societies that value and encourage reading can be expected to have better literacy skills than those that do not. Therefore, greater emphasis needs to be placed on the importance of reading in enhancing literacy

skills, particularly in the modern digital landscape where written communication plays a critical role (European Commission, 2012).

Promoting Reading

Promotion Strategies

Krashen (1993) emphasizes that reading is the only way to improve reading skills and literacy. Therefore, it is crucial to encourage people to read to develop literacy and reading skills. To increase motivation for reading, Krashen (1993) suggests making reading material easily accessible, reading aloud, providing positive reading experiences, actively encouraging others to read, making books visible, and discussing books. Various reading development strategies can also be implemented, such as actively reading, reading a variety of texts, adjusting the reading difficulty, annotating text, and reconstructing texts (Barton, 2013).

To promote reading, it is essential to have access to a wide range of reading materials (Fuller & Sedo, 2013; Krashen, 1993). Since reading cannot be practised without texts, readily available diverse reading materials can contribute significantly to literacy development by making it more convenient for readers to obtain the materials they need.

Promoting reading requires making books visible (European Commission 2012; Krashen 1993; Kurschus 2015). Visibility can be achieved through various means, such as serving as a role model, peer pressure, public book displays, and attractive bookshop displays (Krashen, 1993). The home environment is a crucial factor in this process, as individuals' reading habits are largely influenced by learned behaviours (European Commission, 2012). Schools and libraries also have a significant role in promoting reading visibility. To generate interest in books, visible advertising and book recommendations are

also essential (Krashen, 1993). Overall, making books visible is a vital step towards encouraging and sustaining a reading culture.

According to Phelan (2021), books can provide easy access to other dimensions, cultures, and knowledge, promoting personal motivation for reading. Some examples of personal motivations include engaging with human problems, reflecting on themes, and learning about others. In adulthood, motivations for reading often focus on self-development, such as personal growth, building vocabulary, language development, improving mental health, and gaining knowledge (Merga, 2017). However, in adulthood, when people have formed reading habits and developed their tastes, other reasons for reading may be entertainment, pleasure, escapism, or simply feeding one's imagination and creative inspiration. Fiction is particularly used to escape from reality and form social connections through shared reading (Fuller & Sedo, 2013).

Shared Reading

While reading is typically considered a solitary activity, it has a social aspect vital for literacy development (Birke, 2021; Kucirkova & Cremin, 2020). Social forms of reading, such as shared reading activities, are believed to be crucial in supporting the development of literacy skills (National Research Council, 1998). Participating in shared reading activities like reading aloud, listening to stories, and discussing books frequently stimulate conversations, encouraging further reading through a shared experience.

According to Fuller and Sedo (2013), shared reading refers to the "interest in sharing experiences of book reading with others" (p. 1), which encourages reading by forming social connections and promoting reading discussion. Shared reading can lead to direct encouragement of reading, though it promotes reading if the material recommended is appropriate for an individual (Krashen, 1993). However, in the worst outcome, the

motivation to read can decrease if the suggested material is inappropriate; hence it is important to consider the individual's preferences when recommending reading materials.

Shared reading can serve as an indirect motivator to practice reading, as it can enhance participants' confidence and ability to articulate their thoughts and experiences and provide an opportunity to critique their own thoughts and those of others respectfully (Fuller & Sedo, 2013). Additionally, shared reading is particularly beneficial for those who struggle with reading, as discussing books can help readers better understand their own lives and improve social cohesion, effectively acting as a "social glue".

Whittingham and Huffman (2009) discovered that even exposure to book clubs could positively impact individuals who hold negative attitudes towards reading, regardless of the length of time they spend in such clubs. Furthermore, people with positive attitudes towards reading are likelier to participate in book clubs. Therefore, book clubs can positively influence an individual's attitude towards reading.

Books and Reading in Digital Age

Digitalization of Books

Due to digitalization, books, reading, and book culture have undergone major transformations (Kurschus, 2015). As Kergel (2021) explains, digitalization can be seen in two ways: it is a "digital conversion of information and digital modifications of devices and vehicles. It also refers to fundamental change that is driven by digital technology and encompasses all areas of life" (p. 86). Reading is now mediated through different technological tools (Kucirkova & Cremin, 2020); book is not only print anymore, but it has developed new formats, such as eBooks and audiobooks (Sullivan & Brown, 2015) to adapt to and survive in the digital age (Kurschus, 2015).

eReader devices were first developed in the 1990s to create satisfactory reading experience for eBooks (Lewis, 2013). In 2007, Amazon released the first edition of Kindle, which started the rapid development of more efficient eReaders, and only three years later, Amazon announced that eBooks sales exceeded that of print books. The development and growing popularity of eBooks raised a concern that eBooks would circulate freely over the Internet, facing hackers and piracy, sharing the same faith as music (Striphas, 2009). Digitalization of books have also raised concern if it would be the death of reading and books (Fuller & Sedo, 2013; Kurschus, 2015), but paradoxically, digitalization and the Internet increased a discourse regarding book culture and thereby increased interest in the printed book (Kurschus, 2015).

In the digital age, books have lost their position as primary mediums to find and share information as people increasingly turn to the internet and social media to gain knowledge (Murray, 2021). Despite that, books remain the preferred medium for conveying long and complex ideas due to their reputation as a respected and authoritative source (Murray, 2021). While the internet and social media provide easy access to information, they are not always considered credible sources, as anyone can publish their views without proper quality control.

The Effects of eBooks

New forms of texts have been found to affect individual's reading habits. Hassan et al. (2021) found that the preferred form of book for Pakistani students' leisure reading was eBooks. Smartphone as reading devices has also gained popularity over the years for their convenience (Kucirkova & Cremin, 2020). However, a study by Baron (2017) found that despite the popularity of eBooks and eReader devices, most find it easier to concentrate when reading print text. Liu's (2021) and Murray's (2021) findings support this statement:

paper is still desirable medium for in-depth reading or when reading difficult or lengthy texts.

Although eBooks may reduce concentration while reading, they still increase access to books, enhance reading and play important role in attracting new readers as eBooks can be read from multiple devices (Kurschus, 2015). Yet reading from screens has been proven to cause digital distraction, which effects multiple reading activities negatively, for example, for concentration, memory and recall, and reading comprehension can be weakened (Liu, 2021). Chang et al. (2015) also raised concern for health effects of eReader devices: the light emitted from digital devices may cause biological effects impacting performance, health, and safety if eReader is used before bedtime.

As reading eBooks can be done from multiple devices (Kucirkova & Cremin, 2020), it is important to consider the potential effects of social media while reading on screens. Social media's effects on reading habits have mostly been researched in an academic setting (e.g., Hassan et al., 2021; Kojo et al., 2018; Rafiq et al., 2019), and its effects on leisure reading remain quite unknown. However, Ngwoke et al. (2022) suggest that engagement on social media reduces concentration and causes procrastination on academic assignments. Furthermore, easy access to Wi-Fi and social media can even lead to Internet addiction, increasing the hours spent using technology while decreasing the time spent reading, reducing literacy.

Yet social media can positively affect reading habits, as Schreuder and Savitz (2020) found. Their research shows that shared reading in online book clubs encourages social collaboration, which positively influences reading motivation, especially if the book chosen to be read is self-selected. Therefore, though screen reading is inherently distracting due to multitasking that tends to happen when reading onscreen (Baron, 2017; Liu, 2021), in this

digital era, abandoning screen reading is neither practical nor correct; reading needs to adapt to the digital environment and reading strategies need to be developed (Liu, 2021). One of them could be enhancing reading through media, which tend to cause distraction. Internet and online world have provided new possibilities for reading spaces, such as digital reading communities, academic blogging, and social media by connecting Internet users with like-minded people and creating online communities (Kucirkova & Cremin, 2020).

SNS Book Communities

Transfer from Offline to Online

Web 2.0, a by-product of digitization, enables easy content creation and discussion with Internet without any knowledge of programming (Kergel, 2021). It is an umbrella term which covers wikis, podcasts, blogs, and social networking sites (SNS, also known as social media) such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and LinkedIn. The sites are often used to document an individual's life, entertainment, creativity, gaining knowledge and finding similar-minded company (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Ting et al., 2015). SNS particularly allow users to create content, communicate, connect, and exchange information with each other, thereby resulting in Web 2.0 not being technological revolution but social revolution.

The development of different media platforms resulted in readers seeking new places for shared reading and creating online book communities (Fuller & Sedo, 2013; Kuchirkova & Cremin, 2020). Online book communities have spread all over the Internet and since communities are formed and deleted every day, it is impossible to completely understand the size and influence of book communities (Birke, 2021).

Readers kept pace with the developing world and found online possibilities for socialization over books through blogs, virtual book clubs, reading challenges, and platforms

such as LibraryThing (Fuller & Sedo, 2013), Goodreads and StoryGraph (Murray, 2018). These platforms are used to find and review books, place them in the user's virtual library and connect with others who share similar literary interests (Murray, 2018). However, online book communities can also be found on social media platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram (Reddan, 2022), which offer a variety of content beyond just book-related topics differing from book-focused Goodreads and StoryGraph.

Social Media's Literary Sub-Communities

Social media have sub-communities categorized around their respective literary content. The platform often names them: BookTok on TikTok, BookTube on YouTube, and Bookstagram on Instagram (Reddan, 2022). These communities use the platforms' functions to create a communal feeling around books.

BookTok's speciality is short videos about the content creator's favourite books, book recommendations or literary jokes (Jerasa & Boffone, 2021), and the responses on the video's comment section create a discussion group (Reddan, 2022). The community is created around the hashtag #booktok, which has over 50 billion views worldwide. BookTok has significant value for book sellers and publishers, as it nowadays enhances the sales of books in stores.

On the other hand, BookTube is used to communicate about books via video blogs (vlogs) in various languages (Perkins, 2017). Originally focusing just on book reviews, BookTube now contains "hauls", in which the content creator shows recently purchased books, displays of unread books ("to be read" or TBR books), and "wrap-ups" which present the books vlogger has completed. Participating in BookTube challenges is a way to stimulate conversation throughout the community. The feeling of community on BookTube is created

through interaction: in their videos, vloggers ask book-related questions, respond to comments or share 'question and answer' (Q&A) videos (Reddan, 2022).

Reading and Books on Instagram

Instagram as a Social Media Platform

Instagram is a social media which affordances have made it one of the most popular applications (Leaver et al., 2020). Inspired by location-based check-in apps, Instagram has developed into a visual, aesthetic platform while also functioning as an instrument of communication (Leaver et al., 2020) based on photography (Serafinelli, 2017). The development of the application has been seemingly positive, as in 2022, Instagram had over 1.21 billion users worldwide (Dixon, 2023a).

Instagram is a multimodal platform, enabling communication in various forms in the same place and sometimes simultaneously (Leaver et al., 2020). It enables visual communication in the form of feed pictures, 24-hour lasting story posts, GIF-stickers and reels, vocal communication in music stickers and video audios and written communication in, for example, feed pictures, comments, private messages, and hashtags. The unique features of Instagram compared to other SNS are its visuality and one-to-many communication possibilities (Shane-Simpson et al., 2018). Instagram's visuality is often the main motivation for joining Instagram over other SNSs, and one-to-many communication facilitates creating and maintaining loose and superficial ties with arbitrary reciprocity.

The visual and aesthetic features on Instagram have nurtured communities around topics of interest (Leaver et al., 2020; Serafinelli, 2017) as Instagram's "visualities introduce an additional layer of connectivity and mediality" (Serafinelli, 2017, p. 109). The shared

visuals can function as a connector for sociality and even inspire physical meets among community members.

Bookstagram: Instagram's Book Community

Bookstagram is among the most visible online book communities (Birke, 2021). Like the book community on TikTok, Bookstagram supports short videos with Instagram's affordances (Reddan, 2022), but its speciality is on heavily staged pictures, in which the arrangement of objects is carefully considered, as Thomas (2021) studied. In pictures on Bookstagram, the book is located at the centre of the picture, surrounded by different props with the camera angle directed down on the scene. The most usual props are hot drinks such as coffee or tea, comfort food such as chocolate or an outdoor nature scene as a background. The visuals of Bookstagram also change following the seasons and holidays. In autumn, leafy backgrounds and Halloween-themed pictures are popular, whereas, in summer, beach pictures represent the season. Therefore, Bookstagram allows one to express oneself by reading and connecting via hashtags.

Thus, Instagram presents diverse opportunities for socialization and community creation (Serafinelli, 2017). The communities can be organized around hashtags if they are used reciprocally and publicly, around the network of accounts based on 'followings' and 'followers', or they can be a community which is not easily identifiable by visible features but demand in-group knowledge (Leaver et al., 2020). The maintenance of communities is possible, as through Instagram, social relationship maintenance and finding new similar-minded company is easy even if users are far apart from each other (Ting et al., 2015).

Serafinelli (2017) points out that the communities demonstrate a high level of engagement in sociality, which is rooted in the interest in the same topic among the community members. However, the connections made on Instagram are often seen as

shallow and not considered actual social relationships as they only happen online, and the means of communication are limited. Additionally, she found that despite the shallowness of relationships and limited means of communication, even participants who do not belong to these communities recognize Instagram's potential as social network.

The reasons why people join the Bookstagram community are not entirely clear. According to Thomas (2021), it could be a way for individuals to express themselves creatively, while Martens et al. (2022) suggest that it could be a desire to be part of a community with similar interests, engage in participatory discussions, or pursue a bookish lifestyle. However, these are only speculative ideas as the research did not primarily focus on the motivations for joining the Bookstagram community.

Purpose of the Current Study

In Finland, Bookstagram has gained attention through various means, including published news articles (e.g., Jokinen, 2022; Lehtinen, 2018; Pakarinen, 2020) and student theses on the topic (e.g., Kylmäkorpi & Siekkinen, 2022; Lieska, 2022). Though Bookstagram predominantly uses English as a common language, there are local versions of Bookstagram, such as the Finnish #kirjagram (Lieska, 2022), with over 245,000 posts as of March 2023. Even, Lukemo, a web portal hosted by The Finnish Institute for Children's Literature which focuses on promoting children's and young adults' literature, promotes Bookstagram as a way of finding inspiration for reading from social media by bringing together the most used hashtags in Finnish Bookstagram (Lukemo, n.d.).

According to the 2022 Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI), even Finnish basic digital competence ranks considerably higher than the average digital competence in other EU countries (European Commission, 2022). Therefore, because of Finnish high digital

competence, decreased literacy and the local Bookstagram community, Finnish context was deemed suitable for studying this topic.

Birke (2021) and Thomas (2021) have pointed out some possible effects of social media book communities on reading, but the topic needs further research. Furthermore, the topic of Bookstagram is not widely researched internationally or in Finland, and therefore the motivations to join literary social media communities and the effects of participation on Bookstagram on reading habits remain largely unknown despite online book-based communities being on multiple platforms on Internet (Martens et al., 2022). Therefore, to find out if the use of social media book communities can promote reading and add to the existing literature, this study investigates the motivations for joining Bookstagram and the perceived effects of participation on Bookstagram on an individual's reading habits. Two research questions guided the study:

RQ1: What are the main motivations behind individuals joining Bookstagram community?

RQ2: What perceived effects do participation in Bookstagram have on reading habits?

This study defines reading habits as the diversity of reading, the amount of reading, motivation to read and book engagement. By examining these topics, it is possible to gain more knowledge on the relationship between social media and reading. As Liu (2021) notes, reading needs to adapt to the digital environment, making it essential to explore whether social media can promote reading.

Methods

Research Design

This study aims to find out if social media book communities can promote reading by investigating the motivations for joining Bookstagram community and the perceived effects of participation in the community on an individual's reading habits.

Numerous studies have examined the reasons for joining social media platforms in general and the impact of these platforms on academic reading habits using quantitative research methods (e.g., Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Delgado et al., 2018; Hassan et al., 2021; Ngwoke et al., 2022; Rafiq et al., 2019). To contribute to the existing research, this study employs a qualitative approach to gain a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of people's motivations for joining the Bookstagram community and how their participation in Bookstagram perceivably affects people's reading habits.

A qualitative approach was also adapted to this study since according to Hennink et al. (2011), it aims to gain a "detailed understanding of a certain phenomenon, to identify socially constructed meanings of the phenomenon and the context in which a phenomenon occurs" (p. 84) and is therefore particularly useful for investigating human behaviour and experiences. Since this research dives into people's motivations and perceived change in reading habits, a qualitative approach was deemed suitable for this research. However, it is important to recognize that the findings of qualitative studies are not objectively verifiable or generalizable, and the data collection requires more time than quantitative research (Choy, 2014).

Sampling

Participation Criteria

The participants were selected by purposive sampling as to participate in the study, one needed to have experience and knowledge of Bookstagram. Qualitative studies frequently require participants with specific, predetermined characteristics or experiences that can provide valuable insights into the phenomenon under investigation (Hennink et al., 2011). It is important to note, however, that although participation criteria are pre-selected in purposive sampling, the introduction of additional criteria during the research process is not precluded if they are found to be relevant (Deacon et al., 2021). Additionally, it is important to keep in mind that “the more purposive the sample is, the more limited the external validity will be” (Andrade, 2021, p. 88).

The criteria for participation in this study were:

- the participant is a literary content creator (bookstagrammer)
- the participant engages with other people on Bookstagram
- the participant must have joined Bookstagram at least six months prior to the interviews
- the participant has a minimum of 500 followers on their Bookstagram account
- the participant uses Finnish Bookstagram hashtags #kirjagram and #kirjagramsuomi on their posts
- the participant is at least 18 years old

Participation in Bookstagram involves the creation and sharing of literary-related content, as well as engaging with other members of the Bookstagram community. In this study, a bookstagrammer refers to an individual whose Instagram account focuses on

literary content (Lieska, 2022). To ensure that the participants had adequate experience within the Bookstagram community, specific requirements regarding the number of followers and length of time spent on the platform were defined. Additionally, the use of hashtags was a requirement for participants to evidence their affiliation with the Finnish Bookstagram community, as Bookstagram is structured around hashtags, as Reddan (2022) noted.

Sample Size

In qualitative research, the number of participants is often kept small as the focus is on obtaining in-depth and varied information and experiences rather than generalizing findings (Hennink et al., 2011), which allows insights into the topic. Typically, researchers aim to reach a saturation point where no new information is gained through the selected method, and collecting further data becomes unfeasible (Deacon et al., 2021; Hennink et al., 2011). However, not all researchers pursue saturation points as there are no definitive guidelines, and the final decision on sample size is often a compromise between theoretical and empirical requirements and external considerations such as time and resources (Deacon et al., 2021).

For this study, the sample size of ten participants was chosen based on convenience and resource constraints while simultaneously aiming to reach saturation point. Analysis of the interview transcripts suggests that the saturation point was reached as the participants began to repeat previously gathered information after the sixth interview. However, it is possible that the complete saturation point was not reached, as the ninth interview provided additional information regarding the perceived negative effects on reading habits.

The sample population consisted of bookstagrammers aged between 26 and 40, which is in line with the fact that nearly half (46%) of all Instagram users fall within the 25-44 age

bracket (Dixon, 2023b). The participants' experience on Bookstagram ranged from eight months to nine years, indicating a wide range of experience. While most participants had been active on Bookstagram for a few years, some were relatively new to the community. Table 1 outlines the participants' characteristics. The participants used common Finnish Bookstagram hashtags such as #kirjagram and #kirjagramsuomi in their posts, and thereby, by the definition of Bookstagram, they belonged to the community.

Table 1*Sample Characteristics*

Participant	Age	Follower count	Time on Bookstagram
1	40	1000–1500	2 years
2	35	500–1000	3,5 years
3	26	500–1000	1 year
4	36	1000–1500	9 years
5	40	500–1000	2,5 years
6	30	500–1000	8 months
7	31	2000–2500	10 months
8	29	500–1000	2 years
9	37	500–1000	2 years
10	36	500–1000	2 years

Note. To increase anonymity, the follower count has been grouped.

Data Collection

Recruiting

The participants were recruited with passive online recruitment by posting an advertisement of the study on the researcher's literary Instagram account. This account had a substantial following of over 800 individuals who were related to the topic. Passive recruitment attracts participants to contact the research team to get more information by sharing recruitment material such as advertisements, posters, or flyers (Benedict et al., 2019), and not being chosen directly by the recruiter. Passive advertisement is effective when recruiting from a social media network, and the members share similar characteristics relevant to the study's eligibility (Benedict et al., 2019). The weakness of this recruitment

method lies in the lack of variety in participants, as they are likely to be part of the same social network. However, as this study examines a hashtag community on Instagram, the participants are expected to be connected with one another through the hashtags used. The hashtags #kirjagram and #kirjagramsuomi, which were used in the advertisement, distributed the advertisement to the community outside of researcher's account. Additionally, the advertisement was shared in Instagram stories of community members by their own will, reaching even further distribution.

Interested participants were invited to contact the researcher via email or Instagram's direct message, as the comments section was disabled to ensure anonymity. Upon initial contact and confirmation of eligibility, information sheet and consent form were sent to potential participants via email. They were encouraged to review the documents thoroughly and ask any questions they might have had. After obtaining their informed consent, a suitable interview time was agreed upon.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The data was gathered with semi-structured, in-depth, synchronous online interviews. Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain as much relevant and in-depth information as possible from participants by asking targeted questions and following up on their responses (Morris, 2015). Semi-structured interviews are particularly useful for exploring personal experiences and perspectives on motivations, beliefs, perceptions, emotions, and contextual factors (Hennink et al., 2011), making it a suitable method for investigating bookstagrammers' motivations and behaviour.

To ensure convenience for both the participants and the researcher, the interviews were conducted synchronously online via Zoom as it allows for flexibility in terms of the time and location, enabling participants to attend despite any physical distance (Deacon et al.,

2021). Interviews should be conducted in a comfortable environment with adequate time allotted to let participants fully express their views (Deacon et al., 2021), and synchronous online interviews were deemed ideal for this purpose, as they allowed convenience of choice that suited participants' schedules. Additionally, this method replicated the online connection of Bookstagram communities, which often meet in cyberspace (Faraj et al., 2016). However, online synchronous interviews are highly dependent upon a high-speed Internet connection which can provide challenges during the interview (Deacon et al., 2021).

The interviews were structured into five main sections: opening questions, questions about Bookstagram, questions about motivations for joining Bookstagram, questions about the effects of participation on Bookstagram, and demographic questions. During interviews, participants were asked a series of questions related to their experiences and behaviour on Bookstagram, followed by follow-up questions based on topical probes to explore and clarify their responses further (see appendix A for the original interview guide and the questions' English translation). The interviews were conducted in Finnish using the video conference platform Zoom during weeks 9 to 12 in March 2023. Zoom was also used to record the interviews for later analysis.

The interview followed a structure that progressed from general to more specific questions. This approach helped to ease any tension felt by participants and enabled them to become more comfortable during the interview while also allowing the emergence of impactful information that could be used later in the interview (Leavy, 2017). For certain topics, the interview consisted of closed-ended questions to initially confirm a specific behaviour or occurrence, followed by open-ended questions based on topical probes to encourage participants to elaborate on their responses.

The validity of the interview guide was pilot tested by one individual before the actual interviews to ensure its efficiency. Some changes were made to the interview guide to focus more specifically on the researched topics.

Data Analysis

The recorded interviews were initially transcribed using Microsoft Word's transcription function. However, as there were mistakes in the transcripts, a manual correction was implemented where the researcher listened to the audio and made needed corrections to all transcripts to ensure the data quality. Additionally, the transcripts were anonymized by deleting names, health information, specific locations, and any other identifying or sensitive information.

Thematic analysis, which is used to identify, analyse, and report patterns within a data set called themes and to answer the research question in a meaningful way instead of focusing on the questions of quantity (Scharp & Sanders, 2019), was applied to examine the data. Thematic analysis consists of six steps which are: (1) getting familiar with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) finding themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing a report (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and it was conducted with NVivo qualitative data analysis software.

To begin the data analysis process, the first three interviews' transcriptions were initially coded based on the literature and patterns discovered in the data, and the rest of the coding was conducted based on these initial codes. After coding all the transcripts with the initial codes, more abstract sub-themes were identified on the codes. These sub-themes were combined to form five main themes while simultaneously reviewing them. Afterwards, the larger themes were reviewed and ultimately merged into two main themes: motivations

and effects, comprising a total of seven more specific sub-themes. The sub-themes for motivations are bookish interests, Instagram's affordances, and sociality while effects' sub-themes are amount of reading, diversity of reading, reading engagement and reading motivation.

The purpose of these themes was to explain the topics discussed during the interviews and to answer the research questions. The main themes were organized in line with the research questions with sub-themes supporting more specific analysis of the data (see table 2 on Appendix B for the codebook that includes themes, descriptions, and example quotes).

Ethical Considerations

Ethics for Interviewing

According to Hennink et al. (2011), key ethical considerations in research with human subjects include obtaining informed consent, respecting self-determination, minimizing harm, ensuring anonymity, and maintaining confidentiality. Research must also be honest, objective, transparent, fair, respectful, and accountable (ALLEA, 2017). This research followed these principles to the best extent possible.

The participants must be informed adequately and comprehensibly about the research even before they decide to participate in the study, and the decision is the participants' only, including the decision to withdraw from the study without negative consequences (Hennink et al., 2011). The researcher also needs to guarantee participants' safety, not put them at any risk, and always keep the participant anonymous. Finally, researcher needs to ensure the confidentiality of the data records.

During the recruitment, the interested participants were immediately informed about the requirements for participation. After initial discussion, detailed information sheet about

the study and consent form, including the participants' rights, were sent to interested individuals via email, and they were asked to carefully read through the documents and consider their willingness to participate (see appendix for C the information sheet and Appendix D for the consent form). After participants gave their written consent, an interview slot was agreed upon based on the participants' schedules.

The online interviews were conducted to allow participants to choose a comfortable location and avoid bias based on living area (Hennink et al., 2011); hence, eligible participants from any location could participate in the research. The interviews were recorded via Zoom, and the data was saved on a secure external hard drive for transcription and analysis.

Ethics for Translations

Gawlewicz (2019) points out that providing translations is important for the research, as translations can potentially affect the research. Translating the quotes also present an ethical challenge as during the translation process, the original meaning can be lost, particularly when cultural nuances are involved. The quality of the translation and the translator's skills are critical factors that can affect the accuracy of the translation; thus, it is necessary to explain the translation process, interpretive decisions, and resources used. Doing so will help ensure the reader understands the context and meaning of the translated quotes.

According to Behling and Law (2000), researchers should be fluent in both source and target languages to do their own translations. Therefore, the researcher manually translated the quotations in this study, prioritizing the conveyance of the respondents' messages over a literal word-for-word translation. Although translating word-for-word may solve semantic problems, it does not necessarily address cultural and conceptual issues (Behling & Law,

2000). To the best of the researcher's ability, cultural nuances and the participants' ways of speaking were preserved during the translation process (e.g., preserving gender-neutral language). However, all participants used different forms of Finnish dialects in spoken form, which could not be translated into English.

Despite the researcher being fluent in Finnish and in English as well as being familiar with Finnish culture and Finnish Bookstagram, there is still a possibility that some intended meanings may have been altered in the translation. To ensure transparency, this study provides both the Finnish and English versions of all quotes used in table 3 in Appendix E, presented in the order of appearance.

As the interviews were conducted in Finnish, the original interview guide was also translated into English for transparency. The translation process followed the principle of preserving the meaning and cultural nuances of the questions rather than translating them literally. However, questions that involved factual information were translated word-for-word. According to Behling and Law (2000), while a direct word-for-word translation may not address conceptual or cultural issues, it can be used for research instruments such as surveys or interview guides for factual questions. Adapting to the target language is necessary for more complex questions to accurately convey the intended meaning.

Hence, closed questions and demographic questions were translated directly from Finnish to English, but open-ended questions were translated with more adaptation to English translation to convey intended meaning.

Findings

Motivations to Join Bookstagram

Sociality

One of the primary reasons the bookstagrammers joined the Bookstagram community was the social aspect it offered. Many bookstagrammers did not have other readers in their close circle, therefore not knowing anyone who would be interested in the same topic and willing to discuss books and reading. However, in Bookstagram they are “able to discuss books with other readers and see different reviews and opinions, especially when you don't have anyone to talk to about them”, as one bookstagrammer explained. Sociality means discussing books and participating in other social actions on Bookstagram, such as shared reading. Another bookstagrammer stated that shared reading activities, more specifically reading challenges and bookish photo challenges, were the reason why they joined Bookstagram:

Then this book challenge started, and my first pictures were related to that challenge [...] the sense of community is what drew me to it. Initially, I never intended to create an Instagram account, but it was the reading and photo challenges that enticed me.

The sociality was reported to be the main reason why bookstagrammers had stayed as a member of the community for a long time. One bookstagrammer explained how sociality has enabled relationship creation, which can almost be called friendships: “it has created friendships, or I don't know if friends is too strong of a word, but people whose updates I want to check out just like on a personal account.” On the other hand, the social aspect of Bookstagram also caused some members to hesitate to join. These respondents expressed

concern about finding peers in their age group and being accepted into the community if they did not read enough. Despite their hesitations, these bookstagrammers ultimately decided to join Bookstagram. However, one participant noted that if they had been more knowable of the expectations of how Bookstagram should be done prior to joining, they may have been even more hesitant to join due to the pressure of meeting those standards. As one bookstagrammer commented:

I have thought afterwards that if I had known more about what it is like, then there might have been more hesitation to join [...] now looking back and seeing how professionally it is done, I wonder if I would have ever dared to do it if I had known, but it's good that I didn't know.

Instagram's Affordances

Instagram's affordances were also considered when the bookstagrammers considered joining Bookstagram. Instagram was found to be the simplest platform to use, and most of the bookstagrammers were familiar with it prior to joining Bookstagram. Some of the bookstagrammers had tried making book-related content on TikTok and YouTube, but videos were experienced to be troublesome compared to Instagram's picture-and-text styled posts. Moreover, the bookstagrammers felt like photography and writing were more suited style of self-expression for them. According to one bookstagrammer:

Instagram is perhaps the most approachable and relatively easy in terms of standards compared to TikTok in a certain way. Writing is a much more natural way for me to express myself compared to videography, which requires cutting and pasting.

The participants appreciated Instagram's visual affordances as it supports their self-expression, and it affected their decision to join Bookstagram. The participants divided into

two groups: those who were exact on taking aesthetic pictures and those who thought highly of others' beautiful pictures but wanted to bring less polished visuality to Instagram and see the effort on writing. Nevertheless, the visuality was motivator to join Instagram's book community. As one bookstagrammer confirmed: "the visual aspect is definitely the number one thing for me on Instagram."

Another one stated that even though they are not much of a visual person, and they prefer writing, it still plays an important role, even on Bookstagram:

I've never been much of a photographer but having a visually pleasing environment is important to me. I like to decorate my home and make things look nice. [...] So yes, I do enjoy the visual aspect of Instagram, but I also like that I can write a little blog post alongside my photos.

Bookish Interests

bookstagrammers also joined the community due to their desire to separate their personal and bookish lives. Many wanted to separate their personal lives from their bookish interests, as Instagram's algorithm focused on book-related content once the participants had found Bookstagram via their personal accounts as one bookstagrammer described: "then my entire personal feed was full (of book pictures) [...] and I was like, okay, this isn't going to work. [...] I created a Bookstagram account because I wanted to kind of separate my personal life from my Bookstagram life." Another one explained:

I like to leave comments, so I noticed that when I commented on my personal account, random people started following me. I wondered why these random people were following me. Then I realized that it was because I had written comments on book posts and it made me wonder how many people were interested in seeing me on vacation or what great meal I had made, so that may have also been a reason.

Finding new books and new readings also tempted some participants to create separate accounts for bookish content as the third bookstagrammer explains that one of the motivations to join Bookstagram was “to create a new dimension for a beloved hobby”.

Perceived Effects on Reading Habits

Reading Motivation and Reading Amount

Bookstagrammers reported that participating on Bookstagram motivated them to read by increasing interest in books, thereby increasing the reading amount due to constant exposure to books. One bookstagrammer described how “you come across more and more interesting books all the time”, which increased the interest to read more. Coming across interesting books seemingly increased the actual amount of reading in regards to the number of books read or time spent on reading, but often not both. As another Bookstagrammer explained: “[I] don't think it has increased it (number of books) significantly because I have read more books that require more focus which slows down my reading speed tremendously.”

One bookstagrammer thought that the time now spent on Bookstagram has previously been spent on other social media, while another thinks it supports reading: “the use of Instagram actually supports reading quite well, as it provides book recommendations and can offer new perspectives on a book.” Usually, the time spent on Bookstagram was utilized during times they would not be reading in any event. Therefore, being part of social media community did not appear to reduce the time spent on reading.

Participation on Bookstagram can also possibly increase the pressure to read more which can be experienced negatively. Many of the bookstagrammers reported having

increased stress about their reading regarding the quantity of books and their reading speed when being exposed to other's Bookstagram content. As shared by one bookstagrammer:

I was really anxious about how slowly I was reading a book, because at the same time, I happened to follow some people who had read it in a week or so, and I actually read it for probably 3-4 weeks. So, I remember that I was thinking how slow I am at reading.

Reading Diversity

Being constantly exposed to books seemed to increase the diversity of books that the bookstagrammers read. They explained how trying out new genres outside of their comfort zones was easier when they got recommendations from their networks. Previously respondents had been mostly reading from the genres they knew to like, and therefore their genres in reading were narrower than after joining Bookstagram. However, excessive recommendations or hype regarding a book resulted in decreased interest in reading it among some bookstagrammers. As one bookstagrammer explained: "when a book is talked about so much, I'm not interested at all."

Being part of Bookstagram also appeared to affect the difficulty and type of text read. One bookstagrammer reported that the emphasis on their reading preferences changed from entertainment literature, such as detective novels, to classics and Finlandia prize nominees: "I have become more persistent with more challenging texts, ones that are a bit more intricate or in some other way, like Saramago, who doesn't understand punctuation."

Book Engagement Through Shared Reading

Finally, in addition to increased motivation, reading quantity and diversity, participation in Bookstagram likely increases engagement through shared reading. Various reading and photo challenges, book bingos, book clubs and reading marathons (readathons)

increasingly inspired bookstagrammers to engage with books. Shared reading encouraged the respondents to read unfamiliar books and genres, especially if they were recommended personally. Readathons seemed to positively increase participants' reading motivation during the time of readathon as they encouraged them to read as much as possible regardless of how much the participant read at other times. One bookstagrammer explained that:

It's a communal thing, and someone can read the same book but have a slightly different experience with it. And all the readathons are like that for me, they give me motivation to read even more, although I don't know where I could find more motivation since I already read so much.

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate if social media book communities can promote reading. To gain insights into this matter, a series of interviews were conducted with Finnish bookstagrammers, delving into their motivations and experiences about the subject matter.

Motivations to Join Bookstagram

Regarding the motivations to join Bookstagram (RQ1), the different types of sociality are the main reasons for joining Bookstagram, which implies that bookstagrammers have utilized Instagram's socialization opportunities to find and engage with like-minded company. This finding aligns with Ting et al.'s (2015) and Serafinelli's (2017) explanation that Instagram communities are used to find similar-minded company or people interested in the same topic. The findings also confirm Martens et al. (2022) thoughts about the motivations to join Bookstagram as their research suggested for the motivations to be, for example, partaking of community with like-minded peers and participatory discourse culture. The respondents mentioned both reasons for joining.

While the social aspect of Bookstagram was generally viewed positively by the participants, the findings call for consideration of the reasons for hesitation to join. According to the findings, the social nature of Bookstagram may cause stress and uncertainty for newcomers, particularly regarding fitting in with the community and finding peers of a similar age. Peer pressure with regard to how Bookstagram functions was also a significant factor that caused hesitation in joining Bookstagram. It is possible that the carefully curated and aesthetically pleasing visuals which often define Bookstagram (Thomas, 2021) may be overwhelming for new participants, making the idea of joining

Bookstagram less appealing. However, it's important to note that not all participants experienced these hesitations or would reconsider joining Bookstagram with better understanding of the community beforehand. This highlights the potential positive and negative effects of peer pressure when individuals are considering joining Bookstagram.

Instagram's features are a big draw for people who want to join Bookstagram. The visual aspect of Instagram is valued on Bookstagram, and it's usually the main reason people choose to join Instagram in the first place, according to Serafinelli (2017). However, the possibility to write photo captions is also important for bookstagrammers. The findings suggest that Instagram's features offer bookstagrammers versatile opportunities for self-expression, which Thomas (2021) suggests is a motivation for joining Bookstagram.

Additionally, Instagram's algorithm promotes community-building by recommending content that aligns with users' interests. This seems to encourage users to keep their book-related activities separate from their personal accounts, as liking and commenting on book-related content with a personal account might attract unknown followers. This is likely due to the high level of social engagement among Instagram communities that share similar interests, as explained by Serafinelli (2017).

Perceived Effects of Participation on Reading Habits

Regarding the perceived effects of participation in Bookstagram on reading habits (RQ2), the findings suggest that Krashen's (1993) tactics for increasing motivation to read can also be applied to Bookstagram. Bookstagram seemingly exposes users to interesting books, encourages and suggests new books, and also facilitates discussions about books, all of which appeared to increase respondents' interest in books and the amount of reading

they do, thereby boosting their motivation to read. These strategies are typically used in offline settings to increase reading motivation, but the findings potentially point out that the strategies could also be applied effectively in online settings. While Krashen (1993) also suggests that peer pressure can motivate individuals to read more, the findings of this study seem to deviate from that idea. Instead, the findings indicate that peer pressure on Bookstagram can be perceived negatively, leading to comparisons between bookstagrammers' reading speed and quantity, which in turn can increase stress and pressure to read more.

Upon joining Bookstagram, respondents reported a greater willingness to try out new books and genres, thereby increasing the diversity of books they read. This was largely due to constant exposure to new books and personal recommendations from fellow bookstagrammers. Additionally, the findings potentially point out that engaging in shared reading activities and book-related discussions motivates reading more. These findings align with the findings of Fuller and Sedo (2013) and Krashen (1993) regarding personal recommendations and shared reading promoting reading further. However, excessive exposure or hype surrounding a particular book can apparently even be perceived negatively, which seemingly caused some bookstagrammers to lose interest in the book in question. Therefore, it appears that maintaining a balance in the content suggested by Instagram is important when selecting new books to read and recommend.

While shared reading encourages individuals to read more, it also appears to be one of the primary reasons why respondents chose to remain on Bookstagram after initially joining. Communicating with like-minded peers about books seemingly enabled some respondents to form relationships similar to friendships with other bookstagrammers, which apparently

increased their interest in participating on Bookstagram. This finding is supported by Fuller and Sedo (2013), who noted that shared reading creates social connections over books through "shared experiences of books with others" (p. 1). Although Fuller and Sedo referred to shared reading in offline settings, the findings possibly suggest that this can also extend to online communities. However, this finding contradicts Serafinelli's (2017) findings on the relationships formed on Instagram, as her research originally suggested that these relationships are shallow and not genuine social relationships. It is possible that this discrepancy is due to the Finnish Bookstagram community being relatively small compared to larger international communities.

Surprisingly, the respondents did not report having recognized any decrease in the amount of time spent on reading after joining Bookstagram. Instead, a possible effect of participation on Bookstagram is that the time spent on Bookstagram seems to replace the time spent on other social media platforms or using Bookstagram during times when they would not be reading anyway. This finding contradicts studies on academic reading and social media (e.g., Kojo et al., 2018; Ngwoke et al., 2022) which suggests that social media can reduce the time spent on reading. One possible explanation for this difference is the type of reading material chosen, as individuals tend to choose their leisure reading material based on their own interests and motivation, while academic reading is often assigned and mandatory rather than self-chosen and voluntary. Nevertheless, this finding hints that spending time with technology and social media does not necessarily result only in negative outcomes when it comes to reading but can possibly change the habits regarding the use of social media.

Practical implications

As Liu (2021) emphasised, reading needs to adapt to a digital environment. While eBooks can already be read from multiple digital devices (Kucirkova & Cremin, 2020), book promotion must adapt to the digital environment. TikTok has already been utilized as a book marketing platform (Reddan, 2022), but other social media platforms that support book communities should also be considered.

By understanding the motivations to join Bookstagram and the factors that perceivably affect their reading habits, publishers, booksellers, and other stakeholders can develop more targeted and effective marketing and engagement strategies. They could create tailored promotions and discounts using the community as a marketing platform or collaborate with bookstagrammers to increase visibility and engagement. Additionally, publishers and other stakeholders can identify types of books that are promoted and discussed on Bookstagram, which can help identify representation and diversity regarding books, thereby creating strategies for promoting more diverse and inclusive reading habits while increasing sales. Furthermore, it might encourage publishers to publish more diverse and representative books supporting underrepresented voices in the publishing industry.

Finally, this study helps to identify factors that contribute to the effectiveness of Bookstagram as a promoter of reading and literacy. With the help of this research, educators, librarians, and other literacy advocates can develop more effective strategies for using social media platforms to encourage positive reading behaviours and habits, thereby improving literacy outcomes. As social media is inevitably part of life in digitalized societies, educators could utilize social media in teaching. Bookstagram could be used in literary teaching by giving assignments regarding it; for example, assign a class to start their own

Bookstagram account or assign students to find an interesting literary discourse on Bookstagram and even participate in it.

Libraries, on the other hand, could use Bookstagram community to promote their own services, give reading tips and start conversations regarding literacy in Finland to advocate for reading in the area they influence.

Limitations

Since the sample of this study was restricted to a Finnish cultural setting, the findings cannot be generalized to represent or explain motivations to join Bookstagram or Bookstagram participation's effects on reading habits in other countries (Hennink et al., 2011). Additionally, as the sample size of this study was small and though saturation point seems to have been met, it is possible that having larger sample size, new findings could have been identified.

Interviews revealed that the participants showed an interest in reading since young age, and they were exposed to various methods of encouragement at home and at school. They were taken to libraries and book shops, and they had reading hours and reading diplomas to encourage reading. These positive childhood experiences likely impacted the outcomes of the study. Had participants not been interested in reading or not received encouragement to read, the study's findings could have differed.

Especially qualitative research requires interpretations and relies on the researcher (Stake, 2010); therefore, some level of bias is always present on research (Gerhard, 2008). As the researcher was affiliated with Bookstagram community, the unconscious researcher bias can affect the analysis by expecting certain results from the research. However, the bias was minimized by identifying its possibility and analysing the data critically and open-

mindedly. Additionally, the process of thematic analysis requires revising the data and themes multiple times (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Although the respondents were from the same Bookstagram community, the researcher had no personal acquaintance with them. In certain cases, the interview guide used a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions to initially confirm a particular behaviour, thereby preventing any premature assumptions.

Conclusion and Future Research

This study aimed to investigate the possible use of social media for promoting reading by examining the motivations for joining the Bookstagram community and the perceived effects of participation on Bookstagram on individual's reading habits. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather personal experiences and motivations about Bookstagram. The findings potentially suggest that sociality, Instagram's features, and other bookish interests were the main motivators for joining the Bookstagram community. Although sociality drew members to join and it also appeared to be the primary motivation for staying in the community, it could cause some hesitation to join.

Participation in Bookstagram appeared to inspire respondents to read more extensively but could potentially also lead to stress and anxiety. Bookstagrammers compared themselves to others, which triggered negative emotions. Nevertheless, constant exposure to new books seemingly increased the quantity of reading in terms of time spent or number of books read, but not both simultaneously. Bookstagrammers also appeared to become more willing to try out new books and genres, especially if other bookstagrammers recommended them. Additionally, the findings suggest that even though participation on Bookstagram requires the use of social media, it did not appear to reduce the time spent on reading but changed the use of social media.

The motivations to join and continue with Bookstagram community and the perceived effects of participation on reading habits seem to be intertwined. Further research is needed to understand this connection better, given as the topic has not been extensively researched. It is recommended to conduct non-affiliated research with a larger sample size to either confirm or challenge the findings of this study. Moreover, the topic could be

further explored by studying gender differences in motivation to join Bookstagram, the perceived effects of participation on reading habits, and differences in these topics between content creators and content consumers. An international study of Bookstagram or a comparative study of two or more local Bookstagram communities would provide more extensive insights.

From a technological standpoint, future research could focus on understanding Instagram's capabilities in promoting reading by investigating how Instagram's features are utilized to discover new books to read. Additional research is needed to conduct more thorough research on Bookstagram and other social media book communities to identify effective methods for promoting reading in this digital age and enhancing literacy.

References

- Alhabash, S., & Ma, M. (2017). A tale of four platforms: Motivations and uses of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat among college students? *Social Media + Society*, 3(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305117691544>
- ALLEA (2017). The European code of conduct for research integrity.
- Andrade, C. (2021). The inconvenient truth about convenience and purposive samples. *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine*, 43(1), 86–88.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0253717620977000>
- Anttonen, P., Forselles, C. A., & Salmi-Niklander, K. (2018). *Oral tradition and book culture*. BoD - Books on Demand.
- Baron, N. S. (2017). Reading in a digital age. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 99(2), 15–20.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721717734184>
- Barton, G. (2013). *Don't call it literacy!: What every teacher needs to know about speaking, listening, reading and writing*. Routledge.
- Behling, O., & Law, K. S. (2000). *Translating questionnaires and other research instruments*. SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412986373>
- Benedict, C., Hahn, A. L., Diefenbach, M. A., & Ford, J. S. (2019). Recruitment via social media: advantages and potential biases. *Digital Health*, 5.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2055207619867223>
- Birke, D. (2021). Social reading? On the rise of a “bookish” reading culture online. *Poetics today*, 42(2), 149–172. <https://doi.org/10.1215/03335372-8883178>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

- Bus, A. G., Van IJzendoorn, M. H., & Pellegrini, A. D. (1995). Joint book reading makes for success in learning to read: A Meta-analysis on intergenerational transmission of literacy. *Review of Educational Research*, 65(1), 1–21.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543065001001>
- Chang, A. M., Aeschbach, D., Duffy, J. F., & Czeisler, C. A. (2015). Evening use of light-emitting eReaders negatively affects sleep, circadian timing, and next-morning alertness. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 112(4), 1232–1237. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1418490112>
- Choy, L. T. (2014). The strengths and weaknesses of research methodology: Comparison and complimentary between qualitative and quantitative approaches. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 19(4), 99–104. <https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-194399104>
- Cree, A., Kay, A., & Steward, J. (2012). *The economic and social cost of illiteracy: a snapshot of illiteracy in a global context*. World Literacy Foundation.
<http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/321997>
- Deacon, D., Pickering, M., Golding, P., & Murdock, G. (2021). *Researching communications: A practical guide to methods in media and cultural analysis*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
- Delgado, P., Vargas, C., Ackerman, R., & Salmerón, L. (2018). Don't throw away your printed books: A meta-analysis on the effects of reading media on reading comprehension. *Educational Research Review*, 25, 23–38.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2018.09.003>
- Dixon, S. (2023a, February 15). *Instagram users worldwide 2025*. Statista.
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/183585/instagram-number-of-global-users/>

- Dixon, S. (2023b, February 14). *Instagram: age distribution of global audiences 2023*. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/325587/instagram-global-age-group/>
- Djikic, M., Oatley, K., Zoeterman, S., & Peterson, J. B. (2009). On being moved by art: How reading fiction transforms the self. *Creativity Research Journal*, 21(1), 24–29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10400410802633392>
- European Commission. (2012). *EU high level group of experts on literacy final report*. Publications Office. http://icm.fch.lisboa.ucp.pt/resources/Documentos/CEPCEP/LITERACY_FINAL_REPORT.pdf
- European Commission. (2022). *Finland in the digital economy and society index*. <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/desi-finland>
- Faraj, S., Von Krogh, G., Monteiro, E., & Lakhani, K. R. (2016). Special section introduction—online community as space for knowledge flows. *Information Systems Research*, 27(4), 668–684. <https://doi.org/10.1287/isre.2016.0682>
- Fister, B. (2005). "Reading as a contact sport" Online book groups and the social dimensions of reading. *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, 44(4), 303-309. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/reading-as-contact-sport-online-book-groups/docview/217897215/se-2>
- Fuller, D., & Sedo, D. R. (2013). *Reading beyond the book: The social practices of contemporary literary culture*. Routledge.
- Gawlewicz, A., (2019). Translation in Qualitative Methods, In P. Atkinson, S. Delamont, A. Cernat, J.W. Sakshaug, & R.A. Williams (Eds.), *SAGE Research Methods Foundations*. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526421036779982>

- Gerhard, T. (2008). Bias: Considerations for research practice. *American Journal of Health-system Pharmacy*, 65(22), 2159–2168. <https://doi.org/10.2146/ajhp070369>
- Hassan, A., Mirza, Q., Pathan, H., & Khatoon, S. (2021). Digital age and reading habits: Empirical evidence from Pakistani engineering university. *TESOL International Journal*, 16(1), 210–231. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1329787.pdf>
- Hennink, M., Hutter, I., & Bailey, A. (2011). *Qualitative research methods*. SAGE.
- Jerasa, S., & Boffone, T. (2021). BookTok 101: TikTok, digital literacies, and out-of-school reading practices. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 65(3), 219–226. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.1199>
- Johnson, D. L., Huffman, B. L., & Jasper, D. M. (2014). Changing race boundary perception by reading narrative fiction. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 36(1), 83–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01973533.2013.856791>
- Jokinen, V. (2022, July 23). Kirjafanit ovat löytäneet uuden kodin Instagramista – näin toimii #kirjagram, johon myös kustantamot ovat kiinnittäneet huomionsa [Book fans have found a new home on Instagram - this is how #Bookstagram works, which has also caught the attention of publishers]. *Yle Uutiset*. <https://yle.fi/a/3-12544205>
- Keefe, E. S., & Copeland, S. R. (2011). What is literacy? The power of a definition. *Research and practice for persons with severe disabilities*, 36(3–4), 92–99. <https://doi.org/10.2511/027494811800824507>
- Kergel, D. (2021). *Digital learning in motion: From book culture to the digital age*. Routledge.
- Kojo, D., Agyekum, B. O., & Arthur, B. (2018). Exploring the effects of social media on the reading culture of students in Tamale Technical University. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 9(7), 47–56. <https://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/JEP/article/download/41608/42831>

- Krashen, S. (1993). *The power of reading: Insights from the research*. Libraries Unlimited.
- Kucirkova, N., & Cremin, T. (2020). *Children reading for pleasure in the digital age: Mapping reader engagement*. SAGE.
- Kurschus, S. (2015). *European book cultures: Diversity as a challenge*. Springer VS.
- Kylmäkorpi, K., & Siekkinen, S. (2022). *Löysin paikan missä saan meuhkata rauhassa kirjoista, ilman että yleisö kyllästyy* [I found a place where I can blabber about books in peace, without the audience getting bored] [Bachelor's thesis, Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences]. Theseus.
https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/748630/Kylmakorpi_Siekinen.pdf?sequence=2
- Leaver, T., Highfield, T., & Abidin, C. (2020). *Instagram: Visual social media cultures*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Leavy, P. (2017). *Research design: Quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, arts-based, and community-based participatory research approaches*. Guilford Press.
- Lehtinen, U. (2018, June 25). Bookstagram villitsee nyt kirjafaneja – tästä on kyse [Bookstagram is now captivating book fans - this is what it's all about]. *Kotiliesi*.
<https://kotiliesi.fi/i ihmiset-ja-ilmiot/kulttuuri/Bookstagram/>
- Lewis, D. A. (2013). From stacks to the web: The transformation of academic library collecting. *College & Research Libraries*, 74(2), 159–177. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl-309>
- Lieska, A. (2022). *Finnish bookstagrammers' perceptions of learning English through literature and participating in the Bookstagram community* [Bachelor's thesis, University of Jyväskylä]. JYX.

<https://jyx.jyu.fi/bitstream/handle/123456789/79658/URN%3aNBN%3afi%3ajyu-202202071413.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Liu, Z. (2021). Reading in the age of digital distraction. *Journal of Documentation*, 78(6), 1201–1212. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jd-07-2021-0130>

Lukemo. (n.d.). *Kirjasome* [Bookish social media]. Lastenkirjainstituutti. Retrieved March 8, 2023, from <https://lukemo.fi/lukuintoa/kirjasome/>

Lyon, G. R. (1998). Overview of reading and literacy initiatives. *Educational Resources Information Center*. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED444128.pdf>

Malin, A., Sulkunen, & Laine, K. (2013). *PIAAC 2012 kansainvälisen aikuistutkimuksen ensituloksia* [The initial results of the PIAAC 2012 international adult survey]. Ministry of Education and Culture. <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/75272/okm19.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Mar, R. A., Oatley, K., Hirsh, J. B., Paz, J. D., & Peterson, J. B. (2006). Bookworms versus nerds: Exposure to fiction versus non-fiction, divergent associations with social ability, and the simulation of fictional social worlds. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 40(5), 694–712. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2005.08.002>

Martens, M., Balling, G., & Higgason, K. A. (2022). #BookTokMadeMeReadIt: young adult reading communities across an international, sociotechnical landscape. *Information and Learning Sciences*, 123(11/12), 705–722. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ils-07-2022-0086>

Merga, M. K. (2017). What motivates avid readers to maintain a regular reading habit in adulthood? *The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 40(2), 146–156. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf03651992>

- Morris, A. (2015). *A practical introduction to in-depth interviewing*. SAGE Publications Ltd,
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473921344>
- Murray, S. (2018). *The digital literary sphere: Reading, writing, and selling books in the Internet era*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Murray, S. (2021). *Introduction to contemporary print culture: Books as media*. Routledge.
- National Research Council. (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. National Academies Press.
- Ngwoke, F., Agbo, I. I., & Ogenyi, L. (2022). Effects of addiction to the use of social media on the reading habits of students of English language studies, university of Nigeria, Nsukka. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 1–10.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2022.2160765>
- OECD (2019). *PISA 2018 results volume I: What students know and can do*.
<https://doi.org/10.1787/5f07c754-en>
- Pakarinen, J. (2020, June 30). Bookstagramilla saa kirjoista enemmän irti [You can get more out of books with Bookstagram]. Kirjastolehti.
<https://suomenkirjastoseura.fi/kirjastolehti/Bookstagramilla-saa-kirjoista-enemman-irti/>
- Perkins, K. (2017). The boundaries of BookTube. *Serials Librarian*, 73(3–4), 352–356.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0361526x.2017.1364317>
- Phelan, J. (2021). *Literature and understanding: The value of a close reading of literary texts*. Routledge.
- Rafiq, M., Asim, A., Khan, M. S., & Arif, M. (2019). The effects of social media on reading habits. *Pakistan Journal of Information Management & Libraries*, 21, 46–65.
<https://doi.org/10.47657/2019211248>

- Reddan, B. (2022). Social reading cultures on BookTube, Bookstagram, and BookTok. *Synergy*, 20(1). <http://slav.vic.edu.au/index.php/Synergy/article/view/597>
- Rintaningrum, R. (2009). Literacy: Its importance and changes in the concept and definition. *TEFLIN Journal*, 20(1).
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/47523879_Literacy_Its_Importance_and_Changes_in_the_Concept_and_Definition
- Scharp, K. M., & Sanders, M. R. (2019). What is a theme? Teaching thematic analysis in qualitative communication research methods. *Communication Teacher*, 33(2), 117–121. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17404622.2018.1536794>
- Schreuder, M., & Savitz, R. S. (2020). Exploring adolescent motivation to read with an online YA book club. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, 59(3), 260–275.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19388071.2020.1752860>
- Scott, L. M., & Saaiman, E. (2016). Promoting reading skills or wasting time? Students' perceived benefits of reading in an intermediary programme at the Vaal University of Technology. *Reading & Writing*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.4102/rw.v7i1.82>
- Serafinelli, E. (2017). Analysis of photo sharing and visual social relationships: Instagram as a case study. *Photographies*, 10(1), 91–111.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17540763.2016.1258657>
- Shane-Simpson, C., Manago, A. M., Gaggi, N., & Gillespie-Lynch, K. (2018). Why do college students prefer Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram? Site affordances, tensions between privacy and self-expression, and implications for social capital. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 86, 276–288. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.04.041>
- Stake, R. E. (2010). *Qualitative research: Studying how things work*. The Guilford Press.

Striphas, T. (2009). *The late age of print: Everyday book culture from consumerism to control*.
Columbia University Press.

Sullivan, A., & Brown, M. A. (2015). Reading for pleasure and progress in vocabulary and mathematics. *British Educational Research Journal*, 41(6), 971–991.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3180>

Thomas, B. (2021). The #Bookstagram: distributed reading in the social media age. *Language Sciences*, 84, Article 101358. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2021.101358>

Ting, H., Ming, W.W.P., De Run, E.C., & Choo, S.L.Y. (2015). Beliefs about the use of Instagram: An exploratory study. *International Journal of Business and Innovation*, 2(2), 15–31.
http://www.researchgate.net/publication/272026006_Beliefs_about_the_Use_of_Instagram_An_Exploratory_Study

Valtin, R., Bird, V., Brooks, G., Brozo, B., Clement, C., Ehmig, S., Garbe, C., Greef, M., Nascembeni, F., Hahnemann, U., Hammink, K., Mallows, D., Sulkinen, S., & Tamburlini, G. (2016). *European declaration of the rights to literacy*. European Literacy Policy Network.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335572055_EUROPEAN_DECLARATION_OF_THE_RIGHT_TO_LITERACY_Full_version

Whittingham, J., & Huffman, S. (2009). The effects of book clubs on the reading attitudes of middle school students. *Reading Improvement*, 46(3), 130-136.

Yates, L., Ziser, S., Spector, A., & Orrell, M. (2016). Cognitive leisure activities and future risk of cognitive impairment and dementia: Systematic review and meta-analysis. *International Psychogeriatrics*, 28(11), 1791–1806.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/s1041610216001137>

Appendix A: Interview guide

Haastattelukysymykset [Interview guide]

Aloituskysymykset [Opening questions]

1. Milloin aloit lukemaan? [When did you start reading?]
Probe: lapsena, nuorena, aikuisiällä [Probe: as a child, at teens, in adult age]
2. Miksi aloit lukea? [Why did you start reading?]
Probe: kannustiko jokin erityisesti aloittamaan lukemisen [Probe: did something specifically encourage to start reading]
3. Millainen oli lapsuuden lukuympäristösi? [How was your childhood reading environment?]
Probe: kotona, koulussa, positiivinen, negatiivinen, miksi [Probe: at home, at school, positive, negative, why]
4. Miten sinua kannustettiin lukemaan? [How were you encouraged to read?]
Probe: hankittiin kirjoja, sanallinen kannustus, lukuhaasteet, kenen puolesta [Probe: providing books, verbal encouragement, reading challenges, by whom]
5. Kuvailisitko lukutapojasi? [Would you describe your reading habits?]
Probe: määrä, tyyppi ja genre, motivaatiot, muutokset lukutavoissa [Probe: quantity, types and genres, motivations, changes in the habits]

Kysymykset kirjagramista [Questions about Bookstagram]

6. Miten määrittelet termin ”kirjagram”? [How do you define the term “Bookstagram”?]
Probe: hashtag yhteisö Instagramissa [Probe: hashtag community on Instagram]
7. Mitkä Instagramin ominaisuudet auttavat kirjagram-yhteisön rakentamisessa? [Which Instagram’s features help the building the Bookstagram community?]
Probe: hashtagit, yksityisviestit, kommentit, tykkäykset [Probe: hashtags, private messages, comments, likes]

8. Miten löysit kirjagramin? [How did you come across Bookstagram?]
Probe: hakusivun kautta, joku suositteli, kirjaston kautta, jonkun muun kanavan kautta [Probe: via search page, someone recommended, via library, via other channels]
9. Milloin liityit kirjagramiin? [When did you join Bookstagram?]
10. Mikä saa sinut tuntemaan, että kuulut tähän yhteisöön? [What makes you feel like you belong to this community?]
Probe: miksi [Probe: why]
11. Kuinka monta seuraajaa sinulla on? [How many followers do you have?]

Kysymykset motivaatioista liittyä kirjagramiin [Questions about the motivations to join Bookstagram]

12. Miksi päätit liittyä kirjagramiin? [Why did you decide to join Bookstagram?]
Probe: halu puhua kirjoita, löytää uutta luettavaa, löytää samankaltaista seuraa, osallistua haasteisiin, muut syyt, miten nämä syyt vaikuttivat päätökseen [Probe: to talk about books, to find new books, to find similar-minded company, to participate challenges, other reasons, how did these things affect the decision to join]
13. Saiko mikään asia sinua epäröimään liittymisen puolesta? [When joining, did anything make you hesitate about joining?]
Probe: mitkä asiat, miten, miksi [Probe: which things, how, why]
14. Kuulutko muihin sosiaalisen median kirjayhteisöihin kuin kirjagramiin? [Do you belong to other social media book communities besides Bookstagram?]
Probe: mihin, miksi [Probe: to which, why]
15. Mitä kirjagram tarjoaa, mitä muut kirjayhteisöt eivät tarjoa? [What does Bookstagram offer, that other social media book communities do not?]
Probe: helpot kommunikaatiokanavat, valokuvat, helppojen yhteyksien luominen, muut asiat [Probe: easy communication channels, still pictures, easy networking, other things]

16. Vaikuttiko Instagramin ominaisuudet päätökseesi liittyä kirjagramiin? [Did Instagram's affordances affect your decision to join Bookstagram?]

Probe: mitkä, miten, miksi [Probe: which, how, why]

17. Vaikuttiko Instagramin visuaalisuus päätökseesi liittyä? [Did Instagram's visuality affect your decision to join the community?]

Probe: miten, miksi [Probe: how, why]

Kysymykset kirjagramiin liittymisen vaikutuksista lukutapoihin [Questions about the effects of participation on Bookstagram]

18. Miten kirjagramiin liittyminen on vaikuttanut lukutapoihisi? [How has joining Bookstagram affected your reading habits?]

Probe: määrä, tyyppi, kieli, genre, lukupaikka, sitoutuminen, lukuaika, muut [Probe: quantity, type, language, genre, reading places, engage, time spent on reading, other]

19. Miten paljon aikaa käytät kirjagramissa viikoittain? [How much time do you spend on Bookstagram weekly?]

20. Millaisia vaikutuksia sillä on ollut lukutapoihin? [How has it affected your reading habits?]

Probe: määrä, tyyppi, kieli, genre, lukupaikka, sitoutuminen, lukuaika, muut, miksi [Probe: Quantity, type, language, genre, reading places, engagement, time spent on reading, other, why]

21. Miten seuraajien kasvaminen on vaikuttanut lukutapoihisi? [How has gaining more followers affected your reading habits?]

Probe: lukee seuraajien toivomaa kirjallisuutta, noussut lukumäärä, laskenut lukumäärä, muut, miksi [Probe: reading books the audience wants, increased reading, decreased reading, other, why]

22. Osallistutko kollektiivisiin lukutapahtumiin kirjagramissa? [Do you partake on collective reading events on Bookstagram?]

Probe: haasteet, lukupiirit, bingot, lukumaratonit, miksi [Probe: challenges, book clubs, bingos, readathons, why]

23. Miten olet yhteydessä toisiin kirjagrammaajiin? [How are you in contact with other bookstagrammers?]

Probe: yksityisviestit, kommentit feedissä, kommentit tarinoissa, miksi [Probe: private messages, feed comments, story comments, why]

24. Miten se on vaikuttanut lukutapoihisi? [How has it affected on your reading habits?]

Probe: määrä, tyyppi, kieli, genre, lukupaikka, sitoutuminen, lukuaika, muut, miksi
[Probe: quantity, type, language, genre, reading places, engagement, time spent on reading, other, why]

25. Onko kirjagramiin liittymisellä ollut mitään negatiivisia vaikutuksia lukutapoihisi? [Has joining Bookstagram had any negative effects on your reading habits?]

Probe: miten, miksi [Probes: how, why]

26. Onko sinulla mitään lisättävää aiheisiin, joista olemme keskustelleet? [Do you have anything to add on topics discussed?]

Demografiset kysymykset [Demographic questions]

27. Oletko minkä ikäinen? [How old are you?]

Appendix B: Codebook

Table 2

Codebook: Themes and sub-themes for thematic analysis

Theme	Description	Example quote
Motivations		
Bookish interests	Book-related interests affected participant's decision to join Bookstagram	"It was really an impulsive decision to create a new dimension for a beloved hobby."
Instagram's affordances	Instagram's affordances affected participant's decision to join Bookstagram	"The visual aspect is what attracts me on Instagram, as I am a very visually oriented person myself."
Sociality	Sociality affected participant's decision to join Bookstagram	"You get to blabber about your readings and so it's lovely to be able to talk about books because there aren't that many other readers in the close circle anymore."
Effects		
Amount	Participating in Bookstagram has affected reading amount	"I would say that it's like increased my reading, so now I've become more aware that I can put this phone away and read."
Diversity	Participating in Bookstagram has affected reading diversity	"I have noticed in myself at least that, in terms of genres that I

Reading engagement	Shared reading and sociality on Bookstagram have affected engagement with books	read, it has expanded, because influences come from so many different directions." "It's probably when you can discuss with others of books of the same genre, or not necessarily the same, but sometimes the same book, these are things which motivate very effectively."
Reading motivation	Participating in Bookstagram has affected motivation to read	"You find such good reading tips from there that somehow you get much more interested in them."

Note. See Appendix E for Finnish-English translations of the quotes.

Appendix C: Information Sheet

Information sheet

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study. Prior to deciding, I would like to introduce the topic and elaborate further on the study. Please take the time to thoroughly read this paper and don't hesitate to ask any questions if there is anything you don't understand or if you require additional information.

Exploring the Motivations to Join Bookstagram and the Effects of Participation on Bookstagram on Reading Habits

Project description

This study will be conducted as a part of TIA069 Degree project, a second cycle course at the master's degree in communication at the University of Gothenburg. This study is the final project on master's degree in communication at the University of Gothenburg and qualifies the researcher to graduate as a Master of Science.

The objective of this research is to investigate the Finnish Bookstagram (#kirjagram) community, with the goal of understanding whether the social media can be utilized to promote reading and thereby increase literacy. Data for this investigation will be collected through interviews.

Participation to this project will involve one approximately one-hour interview, conducted in distance via Zoom. The interview will be recorder, and the topics discussed will be:

Background as a reader

Experiences on Bookstagram

Motivations for joining Bookstagram

Effects on reading habits

Demographics

Research group

Susanna Kokko

Master in communication student, University of Gothenburg.

Gothenburg, Sweden.

[email address]

Use and storage of the data

The research does not involve sensitive data or any information that could identify you under the guidelines of the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Therefore, all the data collected is anonymous. However, certain non-anonymous data, such as consent forms and interview recordings, will be obtained during the research. Any personal information obtained from these documents will remain confidential, but the transcripts and raw audio files may be presented to selected personnel from the University of Gothenburg in case of quality control. The supervisor of this thesis and academic personnel appointed to the task of quality control of this thesis are the only individuals who can require the access to those files for academic research purposes only.

We will inquire about some personal information such as age to analyse the characteristics of the sample. The data might be shared with peers and professors in a totally anonymous way by means of the Open Science Framework. Additionally, the anonymous final paper and the results of this research may also be shared with peers and professors connected with TIA069 Degree project course and on the university website. The results may also be shared in conferences, publications, for teaching purposes and in social media.

The signed consent forms, original recordings and transcriptions will be stored on an external hard drive until after the completion of the research project and until graduation has been agreed upon, and only the researcher will have access to the folder. The material will be temporarily kept in cloud service for an access of university quality control and supervisor but will be deleted immediately after. After graduation, transcripts and the audio files of the interviews will no longer be retained.

You have the right to access the information you have provided at any time under freedom of information laws.

Risks of the research

According to the European regulations (Directorate-General for Research Science, Economy, and Society, 2010), the research is categorized as low-risk, which implies that there are no risky activities involved. Nevertheless, some questions in the interview may cause you to feel uneasy. If you experience any discomfort, you have the option of skipping the question or withdrawing from the study by not completing the interview. Participation in the research is entirely voluntary and unpaid.

Age requirements

As per the EU GDPR 2016/679 regulations, we are only permitted to collect and retain data from individuals aged 18 years or older. From underage individuals, the data collection would be permitted with explicit consent from their parents. As a result, we cannot include individuals below the age of 18 years in our study as we cannot guarantee parental consent from these individuals.

Queries

You can contact the researcher Susanna Kokko at any point via email at: [email address].

Appendix D: Consent Form

Consent form

- I confirm that I have read, understood, and agreed on with the information presented to me in the Information sheet, that has been provided to me. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, asked questions and had these answered satisfactorily.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from it without giving any reason.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have been provided the contact information of the people involved with this study, and I understand that I am free to contact any of them to seek further information and clarification.
- I agree to my interview being recorded.
- I understand that the audio recording and the anonymized transcript may be presented to the supervisor and selected personnel from Gothenburg University for quality control if so required.
- I understand that the interview I am about to participate will be recorded and the record will be transcribed anonymously. I give my consent that the researcher can use applications or third-party services for transcribing.
- I understand that under freedom of information legislation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage.
- I am 18 years old or older.

By accepting this consent form, I confirm that I have read, agreed to, and understood the

terms and conditions for the current research and the purpose mentioned in the Information sheet.

Date and Signature of the Participant:

Date and Signature of the Researcher:

Appendix E: Translations of the Quotes

Table 3

Translations from Finnish to English

Finnish quote	English translation
<p>” saa muiden lukijoiden kanssa keskustella kirjoista ja näkee erilaisia arvosteluita ja erilaisia mielipiteitä, kun ei tosiaan sitä keskusteluseuraa ei ole”</p>	<p>“able to discuss books with other readers and see different reviews and opinions, especially when you don't have anyone to talk to about them”</p>
<p>”sitten alkoi tää kirjahaaste ja sitten siihen liittyy ne sitten mun ensimmäiset kuvat onkin siihen kaikkeen haasteeseen liittyviä kuvia, [...] yhteisöllisyys on siinä jälleen kerran mikä sitten sinne houkutteli, että alun perin en aikonut koskaan tehdä Instagram tiliä mutta sitä luku ja kuvahaaste oli se mikä se houkutteli.”</p>	<p>"Then this book challenge started, and my first pictures were related to that challenge [...] the sense of community is what drew me to it. Initially, I never intended to create an Instagram account, but it was the reading and photo challenges that enticed me."</p>
<p>“sinne on oikeasti tullut jo semmoisia niinku ystäviäkin itselle tai en mä tiedä ystävä on ehkä vähän niinku liian vahva sana, mutta semmoisia oikeasti kenen kuulumisia haluaa käydä katsoa ihan samalla tavalla, kun henkilökohtaisella tililläkin.”</p>	<p>"it has created friendships, or I don't know if "friends" is too strong of a word, but people whose updates I want to check out just like on a personal account."</p>
<p>“Mä oon jälkikäteen miettinyt, että jos mä olisin tiennyt niinku ehkä enemmän että minkälainen se on, niin sitten olisi voinut olla isompi kynnyks [..] nyt niinku jälkikäteen miettii kun on just nähnyt kuinka</p>	<p>"I have thought afterwards that if I had known more about what it is like, then there might have been more hesitation to join [...] now looking back and seeing how professionally it is done, I wonder if I</p>

ammattimaisesti sitä tehdään, niin olisikohan sitä ikinä uskaltanut oikeasti tehdä jos olisi tiennyt, mutta hyvä etten tiennyt.”

“Instagram on ehkä kaikkein semmoinen niin helposti lähestyttävän ja tietyllä tavalla vaatimustasoltaan aika niinku keveä ja justiin tiktokiin verrattuna, mulle kirjoittaminen on kuitenkin paljon luontevampi tapa ilmaista itseäni kun jonkun videon kuvaaminen ja leikkaaminen ja liimaaminen.”

”Kyllä se visuaalisuus on se mikä on se aivan se ykkösjuttu sitten kyllä Instagramissa.”

“Mä en ole ehkä ollut koskaan semmoinen niinku isosti valokuvaaja, mutta ehkä semmoinen niinku visuaalisesti miellyttävä ympäristö on mulle tärkeitä. Että mä tykkään kotona sisustaa ja tykkään tavallaan asiat näyttää kivalta. [...] Joo kyllä se, tavallaan mä tykkään siitä, että siinä yhdistyy visuaalisuus, mutta sitten mä tykkään myös siitä, että sinne voi kirjoittaa aina semmoisen pienen blogipostauksen kylkeen.”

”Sitten koko mun henkilökohtainen feedi oli täynnä [...] ja sitten mä olin siinä, että okei, tästä ei nyt tule mitään. [...] Mä tein itselleni Bookstagram tilin koska mä halusin tavallaan erottaa sen henkilökohtaisen elämän ja sen Bookstagram elämän sitten.”

”Mä tykkään kommentoida niin mulle tuli silleen, että kun mä kommentoin mun omalla tilillä, mun henkilökohtaisen elämän tilillä, ja

would have ever dared to do it if I had known, but it's good that I didn't know.”

“Instagram is perhaps the most approachable and relatively easy in terms of standards compared to TikTok in a certain way. Writing is a much more natural way for me to express myself compared to videography, which requires cutting and pasting.”

“The visual aspect is definitely the number one thing for me on Instagram.”

“I've never been a much of a photographer but having a visually pleasing environment is important to me. I like to decorate my home and make things look nice. [...] So yes, I do enjoy the visual aspect of Instagram, but I also like that I can write a little blog post alongside my photos.”

“Then my entire personal feed was full [...] and I was like, okay, this isn't going to work. [...] I created a Bookstagram account because I wanted to kind of separate my personal life from my Bookstagram life.”

“I like to leave comments, so I noticed that when I commented on my personal account, random people started following

kun mä kommentoin mä huomasin että semmoiset tosi random ihmiset alko seuraamaan mua. Sillee miksi nää random ihmiset seuraa mua. Ja sitten mä tajusin, että niin että kun mä oon kirjoittanut niihin kirjapostauksiin kommentteja ja siinä mietin, että kuinka paljon ihmisiä kiinnostaa katsoa, että kuinka mä oon ollut lomalla tai kuinka hienon aterian mä oon saanut aikaiseksi, niin sitten se oli myös ehkä syy siihen.”

“luomaan uusi ulottuvuus itselle rakkaalle harrastukselle.”

”Koska sulle tulee niinku silmille kiinnostavia kirjoja koko ajan enemmän.”

”En usko, että ainakaan sitä tosiaan kauheasti lisännyt, koska tosiaan on tullut vähän kirjoja, joiden lukemiseen pitää keskittyä enemmän ja sitten hidastaa mulla ainakin lukemista ihan älyttömän paljon.”

”Se Instagram käyttö aika hyvin kuitenkin tukee yleensä lukemista just että kun hankkii sen lukuvinkkejä ja sitten ehkä näkökulma avaa johonkin kirjaan.”

”Mua niinku oikeasti ahdisti se kuinka hitaasti mä luin sitä kun mä niinku samaan aikaan just sitten sattumalta seurasin niitä ja sitten muut oli lukenut sen tyylin jossain viikossa ja sitten mä luin sitä oikeasti varmaan joku 3-4 viikkoa vaan niin niin silloin mä muistan oikeasti, että mä olin ihan sillee, että miten mä oon näin niinku hidas lukemaan tyyliin.”

me. I wondered why these random people were following me. Then I realized that it was because I had written comments on book posts and it made me wonder how many people were interested in seeing me on vacation or what great meal I had made, so that may have also been a reason.”

“to create a new dimension for a beloved hobby.”

“You come across more and more interesting books all the time.”

“[I] don't think it has increased it (number of books) significantly because I have read more books that require more focus which slows down my reading speed tremendously.”

“the use of Instagram actually supports reading quite well, as it provides book recommendations and can offer new perspectives on a book.”

“I was really anxious about how slowly I was reading a book, because at the same time, I happened to follow some people who had read it in a week or so, and I actually read it for probably 3-4 weeks. So, I remember that I was thinking how slow I am at reading.”

”kun jostain kirjasta puhutaan tosi tosi tosi paljon, niin sitten ei kiinnosta yhtään.”

”On tullut sitkeämpi semmoisen haastavamman tekstin kanssa että just semmoisen joka ehkä on vähän niinku kikkailevapmaa tai muuten jotenkin, Saramago, joka ei ymmärrä välimerkkejen päälle.”

”Se on semmoista yhteisöllistä ja sitten joku voi lukea samaa kirjaa, vähän eri kirjaa ja kaikki lukumaratonit on mulle semmoisia, että saa motivaatiota vähän lisälukemiseen vaikka mä en tiedä mistä sitä voi enää kaivaa kun mä luen niin paljon.”

”se oli kyllä semmoinen hyvin vähän harkittu päätös ruveta niinku luomaan uusi ulottuvuus itselle rakkaalle harrastukselle.”

”Visuaalisuus on siinä, mikä houkuttaa instagramissa, että itse olen hyvin vahvasti visuaalinen ihminen.”

”Pääsee hehkuttamaan lukemisia koska ei ole nyt lähipiirissä enää niin paljon muita lukijoita niin sitten on ihana päästä puhumaan kirjoista.”

”Mä sanoisin, että se on niinku lisännyt sitä lukemista, että kyllä mä nyt niinku oon tullut tietoisemmaksi siitä, että nyt voin laittaa tämän puhelimen pois ja lukea.”

“when a book is talked about so much, I'm not interested at all”

“I have become more persistent with more challenging texts, ones that are a bit more intricate or in some other way, like Saramago, who doesn't understand punctuation.”

“It's a communal thing, and someone can read the same book but have a slightly different experience with it. And all the readathons are like that for me, they give me motivation to read even more, although I don't know where I could find more motivation since I already read so much.”

“It was really an impulsive decision to start creating a new dimension for a beloved hobby.”

“The visual aspect is what attracts me on Instagram, as I am a very visually oriented person myself.”

“You get to blabber about your readings and so it's lovely to be able to talk about books because there aren't that many other readers in the close circle anymore.”

“I would say that it's like increased my reading, so now I've become more aware that I can put this phone away and read.”

“Mä oon huomannut itsellä ainakin, että niinku genret mitä lukee, niin on laajentunut varmasti juurikin sen takia, että niitä vaikutteita tulee niin monesta suunnasta erilailla.”

“Se varmaan, kun pystyy keskustella muiden kanssa saman genren kirjoista vaikka, tai ei välttämättä saman, mutta joskus samankin kirjan, tällöiset on semmoisia mitkä motivoi tosi tehokkaasti.”

“Sieltä tulee niin hyviä lukuvinkkejä, että kiinnostus herää jotenkin paremmin.”

“I have noticed in myself at least that, in terms of genres that I read, it has expanded, because influences come from so many different directions.”

“It's probably when you can discuss with others of books of the same genre, or not necessarily the same, but sometimes about the same book, these are things which motivate very effectively.”

“You find such good reading tips from there that somehow you get much more interested in them.”

Note. Quotes are organized by their order of appearance in the text. Translations include example quotes used in the codebook from the Appendix B.