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Engagement of literature influencers on Instagram: Bookstagrammer strategies to promote reading in the family context

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Abstract

Research objectives (aims) and problem(s): This study explores the influence of bookstagrammers on young readers and their families in the context of declining reading engagement among youth in the digital age. It investigates how social media, particularly Instagram, can be used to promote a love of reading and support the development of literacy skills.

Research methods: A mixed-methods approach was adopted to assess the impact of bookstagrammers on reading habits. The quantitative component analyzed the behavior of literary influencers on Instagram, examining their posts and levels of engagement (likes, comments) to identify strategies used to promote reading. The qualitative component consisted of semi-structured interviews with families, exploring their reading practices and the extent to which they followed bookstagrammer recommendations. Together, these methods provide a comprehensive picture of how digital literary influencers shape family reading habits and encourage engagement with literature.

Keywords:

Bookstagrammers,
social media,
promotion of reading,
family participation,
literature influencers,
Instagram,
educational strategies,
content analysis

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Process of argumentation: The article is organized into an introduction, a literature review on the educational role of social media, a methodology section outlining the research design, and a results section presenting the main findings.

Research findings and their impact on the development of educational sciences: The study shows that bookstagrammers create interactive content, such as reading challenges and virtual book clubs, that captures the interest of young readers. These activities promote social interaction, encourage the exploration of diverse genres, and support the development of critical thinking. The findings suggest that integrating social media into reading practices can enhance literacy development and help build a community of engaged readers.

Conclusions and/or recommendations: The study recommends that educators and families actively engage with bookstagrammers to create supportive reading environments. By embracing the innovative strategies used by literary influencers, stakeholders can help foster a generation of motivated readers, ultimately contributing to long-term gains in literacy, empathy, and cultural awareness in educational settings.

Introduction

Social media have revolutionized the ways in which people interact, share information, and consume content, and their influence now extends into numerous domains, including education (Collins & Halverson, 2018). In particular, platforms such as Instagram have become powerful tools in shaping how users, especially young people, engage with literature and develop reading habits (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). This study examines how families can use Instagram to encourage reading among young people, emphasizing the positive role that social media can play in fostering reading engagement and the influence of bookstagrammers in this process (Kokko, 2023; Reddan et al., 2024).

Data indicate a continued rise in social media use among adolescents and young adults. According to Statista (2024), Instagram is among the most widely used platforms in this demographic, with more than 1.4 billion active users in 2024 interacting daily with a variety of content. This scale of popularity creates a unique opportunity to use the platform as a tool for promoting reading and supporting literary education. In the

field of education, the use of social media to support learning has been the focus of numerous studies. Greenhow and Lewin (2019) argue that social media can be an effective tool for collaborative learning and for building communities of practice. In line with this, Instagram enables users to share and discover new books, fostering a sense of community and belonging among readers, which families can take advantage of to encourage young people to read more.

One of the most notable trends on Instagram is the rise of *bookstagrammers*, influencers who are dedicated to sharing their passion for reading (Jiménez et al., 2024). Bookstagrammers produce visually appealing, thoughtfully curated content that includes reviews, recommendations, and online discussions. They exert considerable influence, reaching thousands or even millions of followers who trust their opinions and recommendations. As Abidin (2016) notes, literary influencers do more than promote books: they create active, engaged communities of readers who interact and share their enthusiasm for reading. This phenomenon has transformed the way in which books are promoted and consumed, offering a new channel for encouraging reading among young people.

Against this backdrop, the main objective of this research is to explore how families can use Instagram and literary influencers, specifically bookstagrammers, to foster reading among young people. The specific objectives are to: (1) identify the strategies used by leading bookstagrammers to promote reading; (2) analyze how families can participate in the reading communities created by bookstagrammers; and (3) examine the potential impact of family participation in these communities on the reading habits of young people.

This research was funded by the Chair in Entrepreneurship and Family Businesses as part of its “Entrepreneurship and Social Media” research line. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of literary influencers on Instagram, commonly known as bookstagrammers, focusing on their engagement strategies and their impact on the literary community. Two additional publications have emerged from this line of research. The first, *The Engagement of Literary Influencers with Their Followers on Instagram: Content and Strategy of Bookstagrammers* (Pretel-Jiménez,

del Olmo, & Ruíz-Viñals, 2024), published in *Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación*, provides an in-depth analysis of the content and strategies employed by these influencers. The second, *The Engagement of Literary Influencers: A Cluster Analysis* (Pretel-Jiménez, Ruíz-Viñals, & del Olmo, in press), explores their engagement strategies through a cluster analysis and has been submitted to *Learning, Media and Technology*, published by Routledge. Together, these works contribute valuable insights into the intersection of entrepreneurship, social media, and literary influence.

Theoretical framework

Social media and education

The integration of digital technologies into education has been widely studied, with findings highlighting both benefits and challenges. According to Greenhow and Lewin (2019), social media can be effective tools for collaborative learning and for building communities of practice. In the context of literature, social networks allow users to share and discover books, fostering a sense of community and belonging among readers. Previous studies have shown that incorporating social media into educational settings can improve students' motivation and engagement. Carraro and Trinder (2021) note that social media can function as complementary platforms for formal and informal learning by providing spaces for interaction and the exchange of ideas. Such social interaction is essential for creating communities of practice in which members learn from one another and develop skills collectively.

Manca and Ranieri (2016) emphasize that social media platforms can be powerful tools in education as they offer a dynamic environment for shared knowledge creation. These platforms enable students to collaborate on projects, exchange educational resources, and participate actively in academic discussions. Through these interactions, students deepen their understanding of subject matter and cultivate critical thinking and reflective habits. For instance, group discussions on social media can encourage students to analyze different perspectives, debate complex

issues, and work collaboratively to develop solutions, thereby enriching their overall learning experience.

Similarly, Tess (2013) underscores the role of social media in promoting self-directed learning and learner autonomy. By providing access to a vast array of educational resources—such as tutorials, webinars, and open-access research—social media allow students to take greater control of their own learning. These platforms also support self-assessment through interactive quizzes and peer feedback, enabling students to monitor their progress. Furthermore, the flexibility of social media tools allows learners to proceed at their own pace and explore topics aligned with their interests and career goals. This personalized approach can significantly enhance motivation and engagement, fostering deeper connections to the learning process.

However, although social media offer substantial potential benefits for education, they are not without drawbacks. Ali et al. (2017) caution that these platforms can lead to distraction, difficulties with time management, and raise concerns about privacy. For example, students might find themselves spending excessive time on non-educational content or struggle to concentrate amid constant notifications and updates. Additionally, the open and networked nature of social media raises important questions about the safety of personal information and online interactions.

To maximize the educational value of social media, educators must address these challenges proactively. This may involve establishing clear guidelines for appropriate use, teaching students how to manage their time effectively, and ensuring robust privacy safeguards. By taking such steps, educators can create a safe and productive environment in which social media enrich—rather than impede—students' learning experiences.

Literature influencers

Bookstagrammers are influencers who use Instagram to share their passion for reading (Jiménez et al., 2024). Through in-depth reviews, visually compelling photographs, and virtual discussions, these influencers build communities centered on literature. According to Abidin (2016), influencers shape their followers' opinions and behaviors by cultivating

relationships of trust with their audiences. This phenomenon is particularly important in the literary sphere, where a single recommendation from an influencer can significantly influence followers' book-purchasing and reading decisions.

Bookstagrammers use a variety of strategies to sustain and expand their audiences, including posting detailed reviews, organizing giveaways and competitions, and collaborating with authors and publishers. Such activities promote literature as well as foster active and engaged reading communities. As Hellekson and Busse (2021) note, consistent interaction and authenticity are key to the success of influencers in any area, including literature.

Compared with other Instagram influencers, who may earn substantial income through sponsored posts, bookstagrammers generally receive no direct payment for their content, as they share information about books and reading activities out of personal interest (Darma et al., 2021). Nevertheless, by mobilizing their influence on the platform, bookstagrammers establish a presence in the literary ecosystem (Jiménez et al., 2024).

The rise of these literary influencers is part of wider changes brought about by the digitalization of reading and literary culture (Jiménez et al., 2024). Information and communication technologies (ICTs), particularly social media, have created a virtual space for literary engagement and, more specifically, for reading (Giuria, 2021). Numerous studies have examined how technology shapes reading practices (Cassany, 2012), the experience of digital versus print books (Kretschmar et al., 2013; Margolin et al., 2013), and the role of imagery in social media-mediated reading cultures (Dezuanni et al., 2022).

Family participation in reading

Active family participation is a cornerstone of developing strong reading habits in young people. According to Altun et al. (2022), engaging in home-based reading activities—such as reading together, sharing stories, and discussing books—has a powerful influence on children's motivation to read and their literacy development. These shared experiences not only enhance reading skills but also build a sense of emotional closeness

and of shared purpose within the family. When families create a supportive and enthusiastic environment around books, they can profoundly influence young people's attitudes toward reading, encouraging them to view it as enjoyable and meaningful (Axelsson et al., 2020; Scholes, 2019). Such active involvement lays the foundation for a lifelong appreciation of literature and learning.

Incorporating bookstagrammers' recommendations and activities offers families new and engaging ways to inspire reading. As Dubroc (2021) explains, bookstagrammers provide a wealth of resources, including detailed reviews, virtual discussions, and collaborations with authors and publishers. Families can draw on these recommendations to broaden their reading choices, discovering books that appeal to different ages and interests. In addition, influencers often propose creative activities, such as reading challenges, themed book clubs, or crafts related to stories that families can easily integrate into their shared routines. Interacting with vibrant literary communities on platforms like Instagram exposes young readers to relatable role models who inspire them to explore new genres and authors, making reading both exciting and aspirational.

Moreover, exposure to online reading communities can help cultivate a sense of belonging and motivation among young readers. Throuvala et al. (2019) note that these digital spaces connect young people with others who share their literary interests, while also providing families with fresh ideas to enrich their reading experiences. Families might participate together in reading challenges or use community recommendations to select books that appeal to everyone in the household. According to Reid et al. (2016), such dynamic and interactive approaches make reading more attractive and engaging for young people, transforming it from a solitary activity into a shared and enjoyable experience.

Finally, Olszewski-Kubilius (2018) underscores the importance of consistent family involvement in sustaining long-term reading habits. This ongoing support can take many forms, such as creating inviting reading spaces at home, making regular visits to libraries or bookstores, or participating in local and virtual literary events. By weaving these practices into everyday life, families signal that reading is a priority and a shared

passion. Such sustained involvement nurtures a love of books and instills in young people the habits and attitudes essential for lifelong learning and intellectual growth.

Method

A qualitative research design was used for this study, centering on an in-depth analysis of content posted by several of the most influential bookstagrammers in the international literary community. These bookstagrammers were selected based on a set of criteria, including number of followers, quality and creativity of posted content, and overall visibility and reputation in the literary sphere. The analysis examined not only the posts themselves but also the accompanying comments, audience engagement strategies, and the ways these influencers collaborated with authors and publishers. By attending to these elements, the study sought to identify how bookstagrammers cultivate interaction, build a sense of community, and shape trends in both family and individual reading habits.

In addition to the content analysis, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 families who actively participate in online literary communities. These interviews provided valuable insights into families' experiences and perceptions of bookstagrammers' influence on their reading practices. Participants were selected to ensure a diverse range of backgrounds and varying levels of engagement with bookstagram activities. To determine the appropriate sample size, the study employed the principle of theoretical saturation, and data collection was continued until no new themes or insights emerged. This ensured a rich and nuanced dataset that captured the complexity of family reading behaviors.

The interviews explored how families received and applied bookstagrammers' recommendations, including suggested reading lists, creative activities, and interactive challenges. Participants described how these suggestions fit into their daily routines, inspired their reading selections, and enhanced their shared experiences with books. The interviews also

shed light on the influence of bookstagrammers: how they shaped attitudes toward reading, encouraged exploration of new genres, and fostered deeper engagement with literature. Overall, the qualitative data provided a detailed understanding of how digital literary communities intersect with family life, offering meaningful insights into the evolving nature of reading in the digital age.

Results

The content analysis revealed that bookstagrammers employed a variety of effective strategies to promote literature and engage their audiences, making them highly influential in the online literary community.

In-depth reviews

Bookstagrammers produced detailed, well-structured reviews that went far beyond superficial summaries. These reviews highlighted themes, characters, and plotlines, while also blending in personal reflections and critical analysis. By sharing their emotional responses to the books, bookstagrammers conveyed a sense of authenticity that resonated with their followers. This emotional connection often inspired readers to explore new genres, revisit classic works, or pick up titles they might otherwise have overlooked. The depth and insight of these reviews helped followers make informed reading choices, which, in turn, strengthened trust and credibility in the bookstagrammers' recommendations.

Giveaways and competitions

Hosting giveaways and competitions proved to be a highly effective strategy for increasing engagement and building community. Bookstagrammers frequently offered books, merchandise, or themed prizes as incentives for participation. These activities created excitement and anticipation, while significantly boosting interaction with posts. Followers were encouraged to like, share, and comment, which created a sense of active involvement. Beyond the appeal of winning, these events offered

opportunities for readers to connect with both the content and each other, enriching their participation in the literary community.

Virtual debates

Organizing online discussions allowed followers to exchange opinions and deepen their understanding of the texts. These virtual debates—often held in the form of comment threads, live streams, or Instagram Stories—created collaborative spaces for sharing interpretations. Participants were invited to express their views on themes, characters, and writing styles, which generated vibrant dialogue and strengthened the sense of community. By facilitating these conversations, bookstagrammers cultivated an environment in which followers felt heard and validated, and this further reinforced their enthusiasm for reading and for being part of a literary collective.

Collaborations with authors and publishers

Collaborations with authors and publishers were another powerful strategy that enhanced the authenticity and value of bookstagrammers' content. These partnerships often featured author interviews, live events such as virtual book launches, or exclusive opportunities such as signed copies and behind-the-scenes material. Such collaborations provided followers with unique access to the creators of their favorite books, deepening their engagement with the literary world. These partnerships also gave followers a sense of insider access, which increased followers' trust in—and loyalty to—the bookstagrammers who made them possible.

The interviews with families offered additional insights into the positive impact of these strategies on young people's reading habits. Families reported that bookstagrammers' recommendations helped them discover new and diverse books, keeping young readers motivated and engaged. Many parents noted that the influencers' reading suggestions introduced their children to authors and genres that they might not have encountered otherwise. Beyond individual reading, participation in discussions and activities organized by bookstagrammers encouraged meaningful family conversations about literature. Families described how

these shared experiences strengthened their connections, as they explored books together, exchanged ideas, and discussed interpretations. These interactions reinforced the value of reading and transformed it into a communal activity that brought family members closer.

Conclusions

This study demonstrates the significant role that social media, particularly Instagram, and literary influencers known as bookstagrammers can play in promoting reading among young people. As frequent and enthusiastic users of Instagram, young people are highly responsive to the content and engagement strategies employed by these influencers. Digital platforms have revolutionized the way in which information is shared and consumed, and bookstagrammers have positioned themselves as compelling advocates for reading by using visually appealing, interactive content to spark interest in literature. This underscores the growing influence of social media not only as a form of entertainment but also as a tool for educational and cultural enrichment.

For families, bookstagrammers represent a valuable and untapped resource for inspiring young people to read more and develop consistent reading habits. By leveraging the strategies and tactics used by these influencers, families can make reading a natural part of daily life. Incorporating activities based on bookstagrammers' recommendations—such as family book discussions, themed reading sessions, or participation in literary challenges—can help transform reading into an engaging, shared experience. These practices not only increase interest in books but also cultivate a home environment rich in learning and culture, promoting intellectual development and strengthening family bonds.

Moreover, the influence of bookstagrammers extends well beyond simple book recommendations. Their ability to create interactive experiences, such as reading challenges, book giveaways, virtual book clubs, and online discussions, provides young readers with stimulating ways to connect with literature. These activities make reading more social and

enjoyable, appealing to the digital habits and expectations of today's youth. For example, joining an online reading challenge or discussing a favorite book with a broader community can motivate young people to explore new genres, deepen their understanding of texts, and feel part of a larger, vibrant literary network.

The strategies employed by literary influencers offer families powerful tools for nurturing a lifelong love of reading. By creating an environment where reading is both enjoyable and shared, families can help children realize the long-term benefits of strong reading habits. These benefits extend beyond literacy; they encompass critical thinking, empathy, creativity, and cultural awareness—skills essential for educational success and personal growth. As this study suggests, integrating social media into family reading practices, guided by the innovative approaches of bookstagrammers, presents a promising pathway for cultivating a generation of motivated, engaged readers.

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