

Literary Communities in Social Media: The Influence of Motivations on Engagement and Purchase Intention in Women

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Abstract: A decreasing trend in young people's recreational reading habits has been observed worldwide. On the other hand, young people's daily use of social media has increased dramatically in recent years. With this evolution, different literary communities and influencers also emerged on social media. It is necessary to understand the motivations that lead users to engage in social media to maintain an active and involved community. Researchers have already discussed a core set of motivations to participate in online communities. However, most studies focus on brand communities, and few analyze literary communities' specific cases. There are various motivations for participating in communities. However, we highlight the social motivations (meeting people, being part of the community, sharing information, listening to other opinions) and hedonic ones (because participating in them is a pleasant, fun, enjoyable activity). Engagement in social media can be measured through a passive attitude of lurkers who only see published content or an active attitude when users comment and publish content on social media, generating discussion and interaction in the community. On the other hand, some studies in other areas show that intention and propensity to purchase can be affected by many factors, such as social and hedonic motivations. Could also these motivations influence intention to purchase books? This study aims to study the influence of hedonic and social motivations to participate in literary communities on social media engagement and book purchase intention. A quantitative methodology was used, with a sample of N= 272 female participants in literary communities on social media. The data was analyzed through the modeling of structural equations by the AMOS software. Results show that social motivations are positively related to the level of engagement in literary communities on social media. Additionally, this study revealed that hedonic motivations influence book purchase intention.

Keywords: Literary Communities, Hedonic Motivations, Social Motivations, Social Media Engagement, Book Purchase Intention

1. Introduction

Currently, it is possible to observe a decrease in the recreational reading habits of young people around the world (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007; Twenge, Martin, & Spitzberg, 2018; Loh & Sun, 2022).

The motivation behind this decline is often attributed to technology, the Internet, and the emergence of social media (Brike, 2021; Merga, 2021; Loh & Sun, 2022; Murray, 2022). Despite this, and although using social media is a leisure activity favored by young people (Perrin, 2015; Prinstein, Nesi, & Telzer, 2020), different scholars affirm that the use of social media can not only coexist with recreational reading, but it can also be used as a way of inspiring young people to read more in their free time (Brike, 2021; Jerasa & Boffone, 2021; Thomas, 2021; Wiederhold, 2022).

The emergence and popularity of literary communities and literary/book influencers across different social media are proof that this is possible (Guiñez-Cabrera & Mansilla-Obando, 2022), and it is imperative to study if the engagement existing in these literary communities positively impacts the reading habits and the purchase intentions of books of those who participate in them.

This study aims to take a deeper look into the main literary communities – *BookTok*, *Bookstagram*, and *BookTube* – and study the influence of social and hedonic motivations to participate in them on engagement and book purchase intention.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Virtual literary communities

Although looked over many times, the feeling of being a part of a community has been an important motivational factor for readers for a long time (Thomas, 2021; Reddan, 2022). From book clubs to T.V. and radio segments

and shows dedicated to literature (Reddan, 2022), the act of reading and exchanging opinions as a group has kept those involved more engaged and motivated to read while strengthening the relationship between participants (Petrich, 2013; Augusto et al., 2019; Augusto et al., 2020). These groups are integrated by a variety of people who share an interest for literature and for the act of reading, but are especially popular among the female population (Craig, 2019; Sedo, 2003).

With the current advances in technology and the emergence of the internet, these literary communities have found a place for themselves online, and it is possible to find traces of them in blogs, websites, podcasts, and social media (Thomas, 2021). Complete with *bookfluencers* (the influencers of these literary communities) and legions of fans (Reddan, 2022), these literary communities are generally characterized by their predominantly young participants and preference for Young Adult literature (Wiederhold, 2022) and have significantly impacted the reading habits of young people (Lo, 2020; Jerasa & Boffone, 2021; Wiederhold, 2022) and the global publishing industry (Dezuanni et al., 2022), from the design of book covers (Reddan, 2022) to the titles that figure in bestselling lists across the world (Wiederhold, 2022).

There are many literary communities online, each with its specific way of functioning. However, it is possible to point to BookTube, Bookstagram, and BookTok – the literary communities of YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, respectively – as the main ones regarding social media (Murray, 2022; Reddan, 2022).

2.2 Social and hedonic motivations to participate in literary communities

2.2.1 Social motivations

Literary communities, whether virtual or not, are inherently social (Thomas, 2021), and this social aspect plays the most significant role in motivating young people to join these communities. According to Paladines and Aliagas (2022), virtual literary communities are popular among young readers since this demographic could not find "a social space where relationships centered around literature might develop" offline, which has led them to search for such a space online.

Above all, the members of the literary communities of social media seek people with shared interests and preferences in books (Guiñez-Cabrera & Mansilla-Obando, 2022) and a place where they can not only "share their own reading experience with other readers" (Paladines & Aliagas, 2022), but build meaningful relationships and form friendships with others (Guiñez-Cabrera & Mansilla-Obando, 2022).

It is also argued that these virtual literary communities can become an integral part of these young people's identity and sense of self (Jerasa & Boffone, 2021; Wiederhold, 2022). In fact, and although this may be applied to offline literary communities as well, Wiederhold (2022) defends that *BookTok* in particular "makes space for identities that are underrepresented in the traditional canon and allows for a community with books not considered 'appropriate' for academic spaces."

Considering this, it is crucial to highlight the aspect of relatability that is present in the literary communities studied.

Young people are at the heart of these literary communities (Wiederhold, 2022), and it is vital to them that, in order to participate and engage, content creators are viewed as relatable (Paladines-Paredes & Margallo, 2020). This element of relatability is crucial, as, on top of being of great help when it comes to forming relationships between members, the young reader demographic of these literary communities tends to listen to the recommendations of people they relate to in terms of age, personality, and preference in books (Guiñez-Cabrera and Mansilla-Obando, 2022; Paladines and Aliagas, 2022).

2.2.2 Hedonic motivations

Guiñez-Cabrera and Mansilla-Obando (2022) argue that the literary communities of social media are considered an "entertaining past time" by its members, as they have fun and find enjoyment in both posting and participating in trends and feel like they can be creative all while nurturing their love for literature (Tolstopyat, 2018; Guiñez-Cabrera & Mansilla-Obando, 2022).

In addition to portraying these literary communities as fun and entertaining, it is essential to mention the adoration of books as physical objects by their members (Tolstopyat, 2018). From posts that showcase bookshelves and book collections to aesthetically pleasing and intricate pictures taken of books and book hauls

(Dezuanni et al., 2022), there is an appreciation of books as art pieces and a clear preference for books that are considered aesthetically pleasing, especially when it comes to *Bookstagram* (Reddan, 2022).

2.3 Social Media Engagement

Social media have changed the way in which consumers interact and relate to brands and to each other. It deepened consumer–brand interactions (Vohra & Bhardwaj, 2019), becoming a crucial tool in buyer-seller communication (Wang, Pauleen, & Zhang, 2016). This dialogue is not just between brand-consumers but in consumer-consumer interactions (Hook, Baxter, & Kulczynski, 2018). Consequently, these tools have also influenced consumers' purchasing decisions (Guercini et al., 2018; Augusto et al., 2019; Santos & Santo, 2019; Ferreira et al., 2021; Espírito Santo et al., 2023).

Social media have created lasting relationships, generated connections, and engaged customers (Westberg, Stavros, Smith, Munro, & Argus, 2018). In these, social media engagement is the main force.

Some authors (Brodie et al., 2013) emphasize customer engagement as a crucial element in maintaining brand communities, which is fundamental for brands. In this way, it has received increasing attention from researchers as it influences consumer behavior (Schivinski, 2019).

This engagement is divided into several levels according to the consumers' online brand-related activities (COBRAs) framework of Muntinga, Moorman, and Smit (2011). Engagement can be passive, such as the consumption of information (seeing posts, images, videos, etc.), or active, such as creating content by consumers (user-generated content through posts, videos, or images).

Several authors (Malthouse, Calder, Kim, & Vandenbosch, 2016; Wijeyaratne, Resnick, & Poorrezaei, 2019) show that engagement in social media positively influences brand loyalty, brand equity, purchase intentions, and advertising effectiveness, among others. However, studies need to show the impact of social media engagement on non-commercial communities (not powered by brands), such as literary communities, which we will analyze in this study.

2.4 Purchase Intention

Several authors have analyzed purchase intention, framed in loyalty, over the years. Aaker (1991, p. 39) defines "brand loyalty as the attachment that a customer has to a brand". Loyalty can have different levels in which purchase intention and the number of repeated purchases stand out (Keller 1998). Purchase intention is the willingness to buy an article (Raza et al., 2014; Santo & Trigo, 2020; Santo & Marques, 2022).

Before buying, consumers research, analyze the product, and then intend to buy it (Lim et al., 2016). This intention corresponds to the interests of consumers and the possibility of buying the product/service (Kim & Ko, 2012).

Interactions between consumers in communities foster this intention. Adjei et al. (2010) show that virtual communities positively impact sales and purchase intentions since the information from other members is more helpful than the brands' (Kozinets, 2002).

Although several studies analyze virtual communities, they are focused on brand-related factors (Han & Zhou, 2020) and not communities for non-commercial purposes, such as literary communities.

In these communities, trust in other users' content will be greater, as users perceive no commercial interest (Mir & Rehman, 2013).

Thus, several studies (Aaker, 1991; Shivinski & Dabrowski, 2016; Khadim, Zafar, Younis, and Nadeem, 2014) show that social media positively influences consumer purchase intentions. Thus, consumers trust more what others say on social media than brand information (Thoumrungroje, 2014) to help them make a purchase decision (Bae & Lee, 2011).

In a study by Balakrishnan, Dahnil, and Yi (2014) on generation Y, the results show that eWOM in online communities promotes brand loyalty and product purchase intention through company websites and social media platforms.

Therefore, participating in virtual communities has advantages for its members, which, in addition to interaction, affects members' purchase decisions (Ho, 2014).

After the literature review, we postulate the following hypotheses:

- H1: Social motivations have positive impacts on virtual literary communities' engagement
- H2: Social motivations have positive impacts on book purchase intention
- H3: Hedonic motivations have positive impacts on virtual literary communities' engagement
- H4: Hedonic motivations have positive impacts on book purchase intention
- H5: Literary communities' engagement has positive impacts on book purchase intention

3. Methodology

To complete the research purposes and evaluate the suggested model, we performed a study in the context of social media. Data was collected through online self-completion, and respondents were contacted through social media. In order to gather responses to our survey, an account named 'Social Books' was created on *Instagram* and direct contact was established with the literary community of said social media platform. This was accomplished by publishing different posts integrating *hashtags* widely used by the literary community of *Instagram*, establishing contact with different *bookfluencers*, and by engaging with the publications of different members of the community.

The concepts were operationalized using scales already tested in the literature and adapted to the context of our study. Thus, this investigation uses three items from Bang et al. (2018) for social motivations (MSOC). Hedonic motivations (MHED) were measured using three items adapted from Baabdullah (2018) and two items for the engagement Schivinski et al. (2016). We also follow the two items from Limei and Wei (2020) to measure the intention to buy books. All items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Data was collected through a self-administered survey conducted between September and October 2022. We collected 272 valid responses, and Table 1 shows the sample characteristics. The focus of this study is the women that participate in social media literary communities. Although it wasn't our intention to study a female-only sample and no gender restrictions were applied during the development of this study, 100% of our 272 valid responses were given by women. This can be explained by the predominance of women in these literary communities, who participate in greater numbers than men. It is also relevant to say that 54.4% of the participants in this study were under 30 years old and, in many cases, had a university degree.

Table 1. Sample

Variable	Category	N (%)
Gender	Female	272 (100%)
Age	< 20 years old	52 (19.1%)
	20-29 years	145 (53.3%)
	30-39 years	55 (20.2%)
	40-49 years	16 (5.9%)
	50 years old or higher	4 (1.5%)
Education	Basic school	11 (4.0%)
	Secondary school	104 (38.2%)
	University degree	157 (57.8%)

4. Results

The sample size permits using multivariate analysis techniques such as structural equation modeling (SEM) considering the 5:1 (responses: items) rule. This technique (SEM) has extensive use in analyzing the proposed relationships. Therefore, to test the hypothesis, the AMOS software was used.

The SEM multivariate analysis techniques have two phases. First, the analysis of the reliability and validity measurement model, and second, the analysis of the hypotheses through the significance of the relationships between the variables.

Consequently, a preliminary data analysis was realized, and we ran a series of regression models on the various constructs to calculate the VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) value. Thus, we found that the VIF value is below the threshold recommended by the literature (VIF <5). So, we considered that multicollinearity is not considered problematic.

Following the analysis of asymmetry (Sk - Skewness) and flatness (Ku - Kurtosis), we concluded that the items do not diverge from normality (Sk<3; Ku<7). Additionally, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was obtained, as well as Bartlett's test of sphericity, to measure sampling adequacy. The KMO is 0.828 (>0.7) and the sphericity is significant at p<0.05. Therefore, the data are adjusted for factor analysis.

In addition, the common method bias was analyzed because our data were collected from the same source (Podsakoff et al., 2003). To analyze this potential bias, we used ex-ante and ex-post methods. The ex-ante methods were followed by suggestions from the literature. We pre-tested the questionnaire with 14 social network users to avoid ambiguous items and questions with complex syntax. In addition, on the first page of the survey, we informed respondents about the anonymity of their answers and that there would be no right or wrong answers for each item. From the procedures, ex-post, we ran Harman's one-factor test, and the result shows four factors, and the first factor explains 28.61% of the variance.

4.1 Measurement Model

As the study variables were measured using existing scales, a confirmatory factor analysis with maximum likelihood estimation was performed to verify reliability and validity. The results of the model fit indices were acceptable ($\chi^2 = 86.937$; $df = 29$; $\chi^2 / df = 2.998$; GFI=0.946; CFI=0.971; NFI=0.957; IFI=0.971; TLI=0.954; RMSEA=0.084) (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Hair et al., 2018).

Convergent validity and reliability were analyzed through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (C.R.). Thus, Table 2 shows that AVE (ranging from 0.660 to 0.842) and C.R. (ranging from 0.789 to 0.941) is above the threshold values (AVE>0.5; C.R.>0.7). In addition, we examined the standardized loadings (λ), which are above the recommended value (Chin, 1998).

Table 2 – Measurement model

Latent variable	Items Code	λ	t-values	R ²	CR	AVE
MSOC	MSOC1	0.854	(a)	0.729	0.888	0.726
	MSOC2	0.915	19.513	0.838		
	MSOC3	0.782	15.312	0.612		
MHED	MHED1	0.856	(a)	0.732	0.941	0.842
	MHED2	0.947	22.842	0.897		
	MHED3	0.947	23.224	0.897		
ENG	ENG1	0.848	(a)	0.719	0.826	0.704
	ENG2	0.83	11.114	0.688		
INT	INT1	0.638	(a)	0.407	0.789	0.660
	INT2	0.956	3.037	0.871		

Following, we present in table 3 the Fornell and Larcker criterion to examine discriminant validity. We observed that all AVE values (on the diagonal of table 3) are higher than the squared inter-construct correlation estimates.

Table 3 – Discriminant Validity

	MSOC	MHED	ENG	INT
MSOC	0.726			
MHED	0.501	0.842		
ENG	0.404	0.265	0.704	
INT	0.016	0.069	0.006	0.698

4.2 Structural Model

After the measurement analysis, we tested the hypotheses. Table 4 reveals that the structural model validated 2 of the five hypotheses. Furthermore, we found that the conceptual model showed an adequate fit ($\chi^2=86.937$; $df =29$; $\chi^2/df=2.998$; $GFI=0.946$; $CFI=0.971$; $NFI=0.957$; $IFI=0.971$; $TLI=0.954$; $RMSEA=0.084$) (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

Table 4 – Measurement model

Hypotheses	Path	β	t-values	p-values	Result
H1	MSOC→ENG	0,542	5,902	p<0.01	Corroborated
H2	MSOC→INT	-0,071	-0,658	0,511	Not corroborated
H3	MHED→ENG	0,132	1,515	0,13	Not corroborated
H4	MHED→INT	0,323	2,3	0,021	Corroborated
H5	ENG→INT	-0,083	-0,953	0,34	Not corroborated

5. Discussion and Conclusions

With the rapid changes in technology and the growth of the internet, many young readers found themselves in virtual literary communities. These communities, present in different social media platforms, allow their members to find a social space where they can share their passion for books and reading with like-minded people (Guiñez-Cabrera & Mansilla-Obando, 2022; Paladines & Aliagas, 2022).

Social media generates content that users consider valuable; increasingly, the information disseminated on social media is used for purchasing decisions (Aaker, 1991; Shivinski & Dabrowski, 2016; Khadim, Zafar, Younis, and Nadeem, 2014). Having this in mind, our study sought to analyze the impact of hedonic and social motivations on engagement in literary communities and on the intention to buy books.

The popularity of virtual literary communities was the reason behind this study and, in order to conduct it, an online self-completion survey for the members of the virtual literary community of Instagram was developed. Although there were no restrictions to the participants other than being a part of a social media literary community, 100% of the participants of the study consisted of women and 72,4% consisted of people under 30 years of age. This corroborates with the affirmations made by Craig (2019) and Sedo (2003), who claim that the greatest chunk of participants in literary communities are women, and with the affirmations made by Wiederhold (2022), who claims that online literary communities in particular are vastly made up by young people.

Engagement in social media is higher in young consumers and, by the results of this study, we corroborate that engagement in virtual literary communities is greater influenced by social motivations rather than hedonic ones. In this sense, the interactions between consumers in virtual literary communities are justified, above all, by the social need of readers of finding a community where they can form relationships with people they relate to and share interests with. This finding agrees with the works of Paladines and Aliagas (2022) and Guiñez-Cabrera and Mansilla-Obando (2022).

However, if engagement is generated mainly by social motivations, purchase intention is generated by the hedonic motivations of each individual. It is perceived that reading is still a pleasure that individuals have.

Finally, this study did not prove that there is a correlation between engagement and purchase intention in virtual literary communities. These finding may be due to the fact these communities are mainly made up of a younger audience, who typically possess a smaller purchasing power.

We consider our sample, which is composed mainly of young, college-educated women, a limitation of our work. Further studies should be conducted to analyze samples with more differentiated audiences. We also consider that virtual communities are distinct and vary according to the social media platform they exist in (Murray, 2022; Reddan, 2022). Having this in mind, analyzing and comparing members in different virtual literary communities – such as BookTok or BookTube instead of just Bookstagram – may have interesting results.

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