Online Social Reading Platforms: An Investigation into the Participatory Cultures on Goodreads, LibraryThing, Amazon and Wattpad

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Reading is inherently a private act, whether one does it for leisure or self-development purposes. Whilst reading or after finishing a text, anyone can decide to turn the act of reading into a social experience. The sociability of reading can come from in-depth discussion with others about the contents of a text, writing a review to share with others, reacting and responding to forums related to a text, participating in book club activities, or simply reading comments others have posted about the written work. However, even in the case of a group reading session, the processing of the contents of a text occurs within the bounds of one person's mind. That does not mean that someone's interpretation of a text cannot be altered or influenced through the discussion of that text, but there are private thoughts and opinions versus the things a person might decide to share. The history of the written word goes back thousands of years and, since its earliest forms, writing has evolved with cultural, lingual and technological advancements. The lengthy, dynamic history of the book led to the blossoming of an academic field dedicated to its mapping. Book history, not to be confused with literary studies, developed to trace the historical evolution of the book's format, rather than its contents (Murray, 2019). For several years, the publishing industry has been facing digitization much like the music and television industries have since the 1980s. In technical terms, "[d]igitization is the process of coding signals as numbers. When signals are digital, computer technology can be and is involved in all stages of production, as well as in distribution and media use." (Storsul & Fagerjord, 2008, p.1) Therefore, the concept of digitalization, in the media realm, can be understood to be the reorientation of one's engagement and interaction with various media texts according to the nature of their digitization. This book-related digitalization has opened up opportunities to connect with communities online dedicated to a social experience of their reading.

Furthermore, the invention of the electronic book (e-book) led to significant discussion regarding the future of the book. The history of the e-book can be traced back to the 1970s, with the foundation of Project Gutenberg. Initiated by the inventor of e-books, Michael Hart, in 1971, Project Gutenberg is dedicated to the digitizing of books and their free online distribution (*About Project Gutenberg).* Since then, the phenomenon of the e-book has transformed ideas on the materiality of the book. For example, Tully Barnett (2015) interprets the transformation as the "content of a text (the soul) released from the material constraint (the body) of a book." (p.4) Moreover, many critics have and continue to propose that the possibilities afforded by Web 2.0, digitization and online text distribution will see to it that the print book will become nothing but memory. However, on account of a book history framework, professor and author Simone Murray (2019) maintains that the physical "book thus remains in wide circulation, but it is created, promoted, sold, evaluated, consecrated, consumed and debated within a pervasively digital agential mesh." (p.2) Therefore, whilst being far from extinction, the book has become tied to many digital processes. At the same time, many companies have grown and taken advantage of the digital era to

produce, distribute and/or host spaces for dialogue with respect to books. Barnett (2015) refers to the type of reading facilitated by such companies, tools and platforms as "social reading" (p.2). According to Barnett (2015), digital social reading creates the space for "friends, acquaintances, and strangers to co-inhabit a book with the reader [as well as …] co-construct a reading with more layers and nuances than was available for the printed book." (p.2) Social reading makes it so that traces of other people's reading habits and reflections are felt by the reader while they go through a text. An example of social reading is the highlighting feature in Kindle. With this feature, those reading a Kindle book can see faint markings that represent popular fragments highlighted by others during their own reading of the text.

Accordingly, the digital spaces for dialogue and book-related discussion represent the digitalization of the publishing industry and book culture. Digitalization's essence is found in human action and interaction. People tie their media consumption and production to technological evolution. Therefore, when online spaces were made available to users, they took to such spaces to further their engagement with media texts. Readers took to digital spaces to participate with one another because of a shared interest in books, and the roles between producers and consumers transformed into a culture of convergence in which boundaries blurred. Online reader communities grew and became platforms of engagement, interaction, participation and convergence. The platforms that will be investigated throughout this paper are considered *digital libraries*. A digital library is a space in which collections of media texts are stored and made available to individual users and larger online communities. More specifically, the platforms under investigation are all examples of a *social* digital library which also "offers services, relating to the content, by or through the digital library to user communities" (Worrall, 2019, p.744). Throughout this paper, the following platforms will be referred to as online social reading platforms rather than social digital libraries because of the focus on participatory reading cultures. Amazon (www.amazon.com), Goodreads (www.goodreads.com), LibraryThing (https://www.librarything.com/) and Wattpad (www.wattpad.com) will be the online social reading platforms under investigation. These platforms, the notion of participatory culture and social reading can be perceived as byproducts of Web 2.0 and its essence of "collective intelligence" (O'Reilly, 2005). With written text being one of the oldest media forms, its evolution to a digital format and the digitalization and social engagement that occurs because of it is what motivates this research. Rather than delving into an exploration of the digitization of a media text in and of itself, this research seeks to uncover the more human dynamics involved in reading, books and "information-centric online communities" (Worrall, 2019, p.744).

With this in mind, this paper will seek to uncover the following: in what ways do online social reading platforms reinforce a participatory culture, and to what extent do user behaviors change among various platforms? Additionally, to understand the digital shift of the book industry to a greater extent, the

following sub question will be considered: does online social reading fill a missing gap in traditional social reading, and vice versa? The sub question allows for a comparison between traditional book club-type social interactions and online discussions. However, the main theoretical concerns of the paper are the notions of participatory culture, specifically developed by Henry Jenkins (2009), convergence culture and social reading. The research questions address the advent of digital participatory culture and fills a need in academic literature for research on the contributions of amateur to professional literary critics in the digital publishing industry. Literary critics, in the case of this research, allude to those who review or share their opinions on the texts they have read. The reviews can be in a comments section, a discussion forum, or verbal conversation. Platforms, such as those mentioned above, create spaces for conversation in an age where smart technology is pervasive in many societies. The availability of these spaces to people of all backgrounds, regardless of socio-economic status, also creates a social-scientific need to understand how the communication behaviours between readers of varying educational levels impacts the consumption, reviewing and social engagement generated by books among the different platforms.

The research questions and objectives for this paper will be addressed through the dissemination of survey questions amongst and the conducting of interviews with both active and passive reading platform users, general readers and book club members. The mixed-methods approach will allow for general conclusions to be made through the surveys, which will then be used to delve into more specific questions within the interviews. However, to ensure an in-depth understanding of the topic at hand, the paper will initially define, describe and review theoretical concepts backed by academic sources. The most significant concepts include participatory culture (Jenkins, 2009; Moody, 2019), convergence culture (Deuze, 2007; Jenkins & Deuze, 2008), 'produsage' (Bruns, 2006), algorithmic culture (Murray, 2019; Beer, 2009), book history (Murray, 2019), annotation behavior (Winget, 2013), information values (Worrall, 2015, 2016, 2019), information worlds and boundary spanning (Worrall, 2016, 2019), social worlds (Strauss, 1978).

1.1 Theoretical & Societal Relevance

The theoretical relevance of this research lies in its exploration of online social reading platforms, alongside various theories with participatory culture as the central one, thus filling a gap in media and cultural studies. Participatory culture is more recently investigated in popular social media platforms such as Instagram or TikTok. However, the publishing industry would benefit from insight into the ways in which readers participate and engage in platforms dedicated to the sharing of book-related knowledge.

The societal relevance of this research is related to the organizations and creators of digital platforms and technological features related to reading and the book world. Understanding the users and readers that may or may not enjoy the technological adaptations of a historically long-standing media text,

is of great importance. Understanding the consumer leads to the creation of features that appeals to them and increases their digital contributions and content production, especially in platforms reliant on user-generated content.

2. Theoretical Framework

Through an examination of academic sources that investigate or touch upon social digital libraries, several prominent theories became foregrounded. The most pronounced theories, of relevance to this research, are participatory culture (Jenkins, 2009; Moody, 2019), convergence culture (Deuze, 2007; Jenkins & Deuze, 2008), 'produsage' (Bruns, 2006), algorithmic culture (Murray, 2019; Beer, 2009), book history (Murray, 2019), annotation behavior (Winget, 2013), information values (Worrall, 2015, 2016, 2019), information worlds and boundary spanning (Worrall, 2016, 2019), social worlds (Strauss, 1978). While all of these theories are equally important to the discussion of online social reading, participatory culture and convergence culture are the main theories framing this paper. The reason for this is that these two theoretical cultures enable a thorough investigation into the collaborative nature and behaviour of users on social reading platforms. Prior to delving into the theories, defining them, situating them within this research and identifying their value, it is worthwhile to clarify the concept of a social digital library further.

2.1 Social Digital Libraries

The conceptualization of a digital library has been a contested one for years. In 1999, Christine L. Borgman wrote an article on the tensions that exist from the defining of the term 'digital library'. In her text, Borgman (1999) explains that "in general, researchers focus on digital libraries as content collected on behalf of user communities, while librarians focus on digital libraries as institutions or services" (p.229). Tensions could be explained by the relatively new advent of digital technologies and digitized mediums. Borgman (1999) also attributes the diverging opinions to the various scholarly perspectives people take when defining digital libraries, and that numerous "digital libraries projects draw upon the expertise and research results of multiple disciplines" (p.229).

Seeing that Borgman addresses this topic in 1999, the more recent approach taken by Worrall (2015, 2019) outlines several characteristics of a *social* digital library based on the works of Borgman (1999) and David Lankes (2011, 2012). According to the more recent texts by Worrall (2019), the characteristics of a social digital library are that it,

> (i) features one or more collections of digital content collected on behalf of user communities; (ii) offers services, relating to the content, by or through the digital library to user communities; (iii) is part of one or more formal or informal organizations managing these content and services; and (iv) focuses on facilitating information and knowledge creation and sharing, excluding other primary motivations (for example, selling products) (p.743).

Goodreads, LibraryThing and Wattpad can all be considered examples of a *social* digital library, whilst Amazon is a digital library that lacks many of the social elements outlined by Worrall (2019). Since this research deals with themes of readership and social reading, the (social) digital libraries will more often than not be referred to as online social reading platforms.

To better understand the interactions that take place on social reading platforms, it is important to first explore the theories that explain some of the communication, engagement, production and consumption practices that occur on such platforms.

2.2 Participatory Culture

Moody (2019) is the most closely related academic text to the core of this research because she focuses on Goodreads and Amazon as platforms that reinforce participatory culture, a term she extracted from Henry Jenkins' *Confronting the challenges of participatory culture* (2009). Moody (2019) looks specifically at the book reviewing carried out in these platforms, and her text creates a useful basis on the central concern of this paper. According to Jenkins, participatory culture is a culture in which there is a limited number of obstacles in "artistic expression and civic engagement"; there is a great ability to create and "share creations with others"; there is the potential to learn from others through a "type of informal mentorship"; people within the culture consider their contributions significant; and the members "feel some degree of social connection with one another" (Jenkins, 2009, pp.5-6). Moody (2019) evaluates the publishing industry as an embodiment of participatory culture, in that it has "'top-down corporate-driven' and 'bottom-up consumer-driven' processes whereby content" is shared throughout both conventional and contemporary "media platforms and where consumption is increasingly participatory and productive" (p.1064).

Accordingly, the advent of the internet has, in some ways, undermined the originally exclusive nature of publishing houses. Aspiring authors, creative users or engaged readers can now look to digital spaces to publish their works without going through the intermediation of publishing houses. Moody's (2019) attention on book reviewing highlights the participatory nature of the act. Elements of mentorship, social engagement and creative expression are all evident in online book reviewing. The collaborative effort to review, discuss and engage with a text by a number of consumers, as well as "the 'amaterization' of services previously deemed professional", leads to the building of digital communities based upon the characteristics of a participatory culture (Moody, 2019, p.1074). Moody (2019) refers to websites that allow such interaction through book reviews "affinity spaces" (p.1068). Affinity spaces are the spaces created out of mutual interests and shared activities. Therefore, affinity spaces, social digital libraries and online social reading platforms are all one and the same, in the context of the book world. Correspondingly, the most prominent feature of Jenkins' definition is the contributory nature of

participatory culture (2009). This cultural form is dependent on contribution and interaction. To give more depth to the research, this thesis will explore the contexts under which a participatory culture emerges within Amazon, Goodreads, Wattpad and LibraryThing. These platforms will be investigated with regard to the boundaries that exist between consumers and producers, as well as the features they offer to elicit this culture of convergence.

2.3 Convergence Culture

Participatory culture is generally discussed alongside convergence culture. Convergence culture can be thought of as "the blurring of real or perceived boundaries between makers and users in an increasingly participatory media culture" (Deuze, 2007, p.244). Along these lines, the relationship between cultures of participation and convergence might be seen as interdependent or cyclical, in that one brings about the other and vice versa. Similarly, studies have explored the idea that new media platforms and technologies leave users with greater "control over the flow of media" (Deuze, 2007, p.246). Therefore, developing technologies that ensure the development of convergence cultures provide users with a sense of participation as well (Deuze, 2007). Jenkins and Deuze (2008) reinforce this idea by suggesting that "[c]onsumers are using the grassroots channels offered by digital and mobile technologies to assert their own control over cultural flow" (p.9). Additionally, media producers are increasingly reliant on the activity of their audiences to generate new ideas, get insight into audience desires and to maintain a steadily increasing consumer-base. The media industries seem to manipulate the new culture of convergence to their benefit. Deuze (2007) gives Amazon as an example that makes use "of participatory media culture by combining straightforward sales techniques with auctions of new and used goods, user reviews and customer-community recommendations" (p.255). It seems that although consumers and users are gaining more freedom in creative production, the industries still find a way to further their own capitalistic goals.

Interestingly, the internet itself, or at least Web 2.0, is considered a product of convergence cultures with "its hyperlinked, interactive and networked infrastructure and digital culture" (Deuze, 2007, p.245). The construction of websites is highly influenced by the opinions and measured interactions of digital users. Should a majority of users dislike any one aspect of a webpage, the developer is more than likely to change it to suit their demands. It has also become easier for people to create their own websites, blogs, videos or anything found online due to the accessibility of information and tools. The internet can be said to be at once a facilitator and a product of convergence culture.

2.3.1 'Produsage'

'Produsage', 'prosumer' and 'produser' are terms used by Axel Bruns (2006) to highlight the hybrid nature of producers and consumers in the cultures of participation and convergence evolving in the digital landscape. According to Bruns (2006), participatory settings lead to the construction of ideas "which breaks down the boundaries between producers and consumers … [and thus turns users into] producers of information and knowledge, or … produsers" (p.2). The threat to traditional producers and media intermediaries is greater than ever because of an emerging 'Generation C', or a generation of content creators and creative produsers, that lead to "issues associated with both 'control' and the 'casual collapse' of traditional, industrial approaches to production" (Bruns, 2006, p.2). A produser is different to a conventional producer because of their approach to collaborative creativity. A produser generates content out of their interaction and engagement with another player's work, ultimately contributing to a convergence culture (Bruns, 2006).

Platforms such as Goodreads and Amazon can thus be seen as digital gateways through which users connect and collaborate with producers of literary products. Bruns (2006) maintains this idea by proposing that "produsage [is also seen] in collaborative online publishing, especially in news and information sites" (p.2) Online social reading platforms are examples of digital spaces generated out of the convergence of users and producers, and they are also sites where consumers can go to to create out of the ideas, opinions and works of others. An interesting remark to point out is one by Deuze (2007) where he refers to the concept of "networked individualism" that identifies how "in a digital culture people interact, collaborate and engage, but tend to do so strictly individually, enacting their own interests" (p.256). Thus, while collaboration between users is ever-increasing, their creative goals are more likely directed towards their own self-benefit.

2.4 Algorithmic Culture

In the digital spheres that encourage user participation and convergence, the data and software allowing for such user involvement is important to understand. With almost every facet of human production and process being digitally touched in one way or another, Murray's (2019) exploration of an algorithmic culture seems befitting to this research on the digital book world. According to Murray's (2019) investigation, algorithmic culture is digitally centered and is one in which software impacts the connections among users with one another and "corporate and/or state entities" (p. 3). Murray (2019) focuses on the impact of algorithmic culture on the development of digital literary communities and cultures. Her work explores Goodreads and Amazon as the dominant book-related online communities. The author refers to Matthew Kirschenbaum to address the literary discourse under which algorithmic culture falls, with it being a "collision of computer science and cultural studies" (Murray, 2019, p.4). It is

important to keep in mind the existing human agency behind algorithmic and digital processes, as well as to avoid technological determinism. In other words, evading a conception of societal organization and norms as dependent on technology, especially when addressing digital spheres. Murray (2019) reinforces this standpoint by explaining that "algorithms are manifestly still coded by human developers, tested by IT programmers on actual user data, and constantly monitored and fine-tuned by human operators" (p.5)

An important contributor to the notion of an algorithmic culture is David Beer (2009). Beer (2009) stresses the significance of software for organizations because of software's ability to collect information about people and relay that to organizations in a way that enables them to capitalize on the information. A popular feature of algorithmic culture and Web 2.0 is the user profile. The profile is a space "where information is gathered about us, our activities, our choices, tastes and preferences and so on." (Beer, 2009, p.996) Alongside the clicks that users make, the purchases they make and the overall digital engagement they have, a user profile is an algorithmic goldmine for companies looking to profit from consumers. Software does not only shape company foci and industry practices, it also presents users with data comparable to their digital footprint and online behaviors. "As data comes to 'find us' … so the things we encounter, and consequently our experiences and views of the world, will be shaped by the sorting and filtering of algorithms." (Beer, 2009, p.998) Essentially, an algorithmic culture also contributes to the selective tastes that users build through digital platforms. Goodreads, Amazon, LibraryThing and Wattpad are platforms built upon software and algorithms that track user behavior and consumption patterns. Platforms, digital devices and technology-backed reading should also be positioned alongside the historical developments of the book industry.

2.5 Book History

Consequently, book history and what is means for the understanding of technological developments in the publishing industry is of significance. In her text, Murray (2019) also refers to the field of book history, which is "[t]he study of the book not for its content (long corralled as literary studies' domain) but for its format and the intellectual, social, political and commercial implications of that format" (p.6). Book history, in this context, is concerned with the digitalization of the book and its industry. Therefore, book history is also relevant in grasping the shift from the print book to the e-book. Prior to exploring theoretical insight into the e-book and digital book formats, Murray's (2019) critique on book history is worth mentioning. Based on the aforementioned definition of book history, this research falls within the domain of book history - along with media and cultural studies- rather than literary studies because of the concern with a book's digitization and the ensuing digital platforms. However, four critiques can be made towards book history. First, the historical scope of the discipline leads to the overlooking of digital screen book formats and online platforms. Murray (2019) explains this

as book historians "preferring to understand the digital as the scanning, compilation and curation of print-born artefacts for research convenience" (p.6). Second, book history is not often grouped with "newer humanities groupings such as media and cultural studies" because of its ties to older disciplines such as literary studies (Murray, 2019, p.6). Third, book history does not fully account for the digital processes impacting the industry, but rather "assume[s] human agents driving these abstract processes" (Murray, 2019, p.6). Fourth, book historians might not necessarily take into account the impacts they might have on their research due to their "retrospective gaze" (Murray, 2019, p.7). Any scholar undertaking research online will be influenced, in some way, by the results they come by due to algorithms and digital tracking (Murray, 2019). For this reason, this research is more concerned with user experiences, opinions, habits and behaviors rather than a sole investigation into the online social reading platforms. If that latter had been the subject of enquiry, the results would most likely have been impacted in one way or another by the monitoring algorithmic processes.

2.6 Annotation Behavior

Furthermore, the idea of digital reading itself should be understood in relation to what one can do with a digitally formatted text. Winget (2013) suggests that due to the minimal amount of available academic literature on social reading in itself, alternatively annotation behavior can be explored as "the act of interacting with a text" (p.3). Winget (2013) discusses annotation behavior within the context of social reading, and, for the purpose of this study, annotation behavior will encompass a person's physical interaction with a text alongside their verbal and social interaction with it. In other words, the online discussions and reviews made about a text, especially specific fragments of a text, can be deemed annotation behavior. Winget (2013) calls attention to the impact of individual interactions readers have with social reading platforms and tools, which allow such readers to "see the intellectual paths they and other readers have taken through a text, track the development of their thoughts and ideas, and take note of particularly powerful passages, either for themselves or others." (p.4) Along these lines, annotation behavior falls under the scope of a participatory culture, in which people inform, educate and inspire one another through their remarks on a text.

2.7 Information Worlds

Information values, as previously mentioned, is also a concept worth investigating regarding online social reading platforms. Worrall (2015) defines information value as "the value judgments people hold of information within and across their communities", with such communities being platforms such as Goodreads, in the case of this research (p.4). The notion of information value stems from Jaeger and Burnett's (2010) *theory of information worlds*, which is outlined in Worrall's works (2015, 2016, 2019).

As Worrall describes the theory in three of his academic texts, the focal text for this theory will be his 2016 one. According to Worrall (2016), the theory of information worlds involves five central notions:

- *social norms*, the written and unwritten rules of right and wrong guiding a community;
- *social types*, how people are perceived, as socially constructed, in a community;
- *information value*, the relative value judgments of information within and beyond a community;
- *information behaviour*, incorporating "the full spectrum of possible normative [information] behaviour" (Jaeger & Burnett, 2010, p. 23), including "the many ways in which human beings interact with," search for, use, and share information (Bates, 2010, p. 2381); and
- *boundaries,* where communities may "come into contact with each other" (Jaeger & Burnett, 2010, p. 8) and may or may not share information.

(p.2)

From participatory, convergence and algorithmic cultures to social digital libraries, the online social reading platforms under investigations can be explained and investigated according to a number of theories. However, the theory of information worlds is probably the most all-encompassing theory to aid in the explanation of platforms such as Goodreads and LibraryThing. The theory can be adapted to classify online social reading platforms if the 'information' under investigation is book-related. The online social reading platforms in question all have features that enable users in the "sharing of information within and beyond group and community boundaries." (Worrall, 2016, p.3) Important to the enhancement of an information world and community is the amount of value it adds to a person's experience of it. The information world must be one that facilitates valuable exchange between its users and possibly the users of communities beyond it.

2.8 Social Worlds

Worrall (2015, 2019) also investigates Strauss's (1978) social world theory, which is also apt at theoretically framing the online social platforms central to this research. The theoretical lens is based upon the idea that a number of worlds are in existence, and they are each founded on the "the norms, beliefs, communication, and interactions of a group of people" (Worrall, 2015, p.3). As cited in Worrall (2015), any one social world is characterized by the following features:

- "at least one primary *activity*...strikingly evident";
- "*sites* where activities occur";
- "*technology* … [for] carrying out the social world's activities"; and

- in established social worlds, "*organizations* … to further one aspect or another of the world's activities" (p. 122; emphasis added).

(Strauss, 1978, as cited in Worrall, 2015, p.3)

Further along, each of the online social reading platforms pertaining to this research will be explored in relation to Strauss's (1978) social world theory. However, on a general basis, a primary activity that users involve themselves with on each of the platforms is the discussion of books. Activities occur on the platforms in the form of review sections, groups, forums and more. The technology in question is digital software and algorithms that contribute to an overall algorithmic and datafied culture. The platforms are all accessible online. Furthermore, the platforms are all considered *organizations* that contribute to the ease of participation by their users.

These outlined theories will prove beneficial to the exploration of the ways in which online social reading platforms reinforce participatory cultures, the extent of behavioural changes amongst the varying platforms and the role of algorithms within these contexts. Worrall (2016) explores the structures of online communities that enable information sharing. He identifies that successful platforms structure their websites in ways that typically include the following: "a clear purpose, explaining membership and rules, developing help pages and lists of frequently asked questions, providing direct help when and where needed, facilitating information seeking, and encouraging leaders to stimulate continued interaction" (Worrall, 2016, p.2). This paper seeks to investigate the structures of the four social reading platforms and whether they include similar features, as well as whether the structures then impact social behaviour. Social behaviour in online reading platforms can be regarded as varying levels of engagement (Worrall, 2016), partaking in reading challenges (Foasberg, 2012), social commenting and highlighting in ebooks (Barnett, 2015), creating and participating in online book groups/clubs (Foasberg, 2012), among others.

3. Hypothesis Development

To reiterate the central research questions, this paper aims to discover the ways in which online social reading platforms reinforce a participatory culture, as well as to what extent user behaviors change among various platforms. The paper is also concerned with whether online social reading fills a missing gap in traditional social reading, and vice versa.

The following hypotheses were developed as a means of quantitatively analyzing the overarching research questions:

Number	Hypothesis
H1	Using at least one online social reading platform has a direct, positive effect on writing online reviews.
H2	Using at least one online social reading platform has a direct, positive effect on being a member of an online format book club
H3	Reading more than the average amount of books in one year has a direct, positive effect on being a member of a physical book club.
H4	Reading more than the average amount of books in one year has a direct, positive effect on using at least one online social reading platform.
H5	Using at least one online social reading platform has a moderating, negative effect on being a member of a physical book club.

The first two hypotheses touch upon the first research question exploring participatory cultures on online social reading platforms. Writing online reviews and being a member of an online formatted book club can be seen as indicators of an active user or participatory contributor. It is expected that both hypotheses will have direct, positive effects because of the assumption that being a member of an online social reading platform inspires greater participation, whether that inspiration comes from other users or platform features that the users might use.

The third and fourth hypotheses were developed to investigate the sub research question that explores traditional and online social reading. The hypotheses explore whether an avid reader would be interested in joining a social reading activity, regardless of the format. The expectation is that both

hypotheses have direct, positive effects due to the assumption that people that read great quantities might generally involve themselves in more social reading activities to further their experience of a text.

The fifth and final hypothesis was developed as a means of investigating traditional social reading. It is expected that people who use online social reading platforms are less likely to join traditional social reading groups. This expectation is in place because of the numerous digital opportunities on offer throughout the various online social reading platforms, which might be more accessible to a reader than the traditional social reading activities.

Whilst a quantitative analysis will result in an understanding of the participatory nature of a larger sample, interviews will allow for a more in-depth understanding of the relationships between the different variables and the experiences of a user.

<center>**4. Methodology**</center>

To go about answering the research question and sub-question, a mixed methods approach will be used. The reason for this is three-fold. First, the research questions touch upon matters of a more qualitative nature, such as user experiences, reviews and behaviors on online social reading platforms. According to Hollifield and Coffey (2006), qualitative approaches create "opportunities for research subjects to offer their own explanations and interpretations of events", which is necessary for the investigation into participatory culture since this culture is dependent on the involvement of the research subject (p.574). However, due to the large volume of people using the online social reading platforms, quantitative data will have to be collected to make inferences about the general social reading population.

Second, the research subject, in this case, is the user of online social reading platforms, specifically users who take part in social reading platforms such as Goodreads, Amazon, Wattpad and LibraryThing. They will be both quantitatively and qualitatively investigated to, as previously mentioned, collect insightful meaningful answers, along with shorter categorical data. Additionally, a qualitative methodology will allow for a deeper investigation into the impacts that online social reading platforms have on the publishing industry, especially when exploring the cultural changes that occurred following the industry's digitalization. Hollifield and Coffey (2006) reinforce this idea by suggesting that a qualitative approach presents "the opportunity to develop extremely detailed, context-rich data or interpretations that offer insights into subtle underlying relationships" (p.581). A quantitative methodology, on the other hand, "is primarily concerned with demonstrating cause–effect relationships" (Jensen, 2020, p.211). Therefore, quantitatively assessing participatory culture throughout online social reading platforms can shed light on what concepts or constructs might be impacting one another in the use of such platforms. Additionally, touching upon what was previously mentioned, a quantitative methodology will allow for an assessment of a smaller subset of the larger online social reading platform populations of the four platforms under investigation.

Thirdly, the data collection process will involve the use of surveys and interviews. If the Covid-19 situation should prevent in-person interviews from occurring, they will be conducted online. Additionally, book reviews, discussion boards and the general structures of the various online platforms will be assessed in order to effectively construct interview and survey questions. The survey will be constructed using pre-existing scales regarding participatory culture and online social platforms. The interviews will be semi-structured and will be used to collect more in-depth information about the experiences different users have when using social reading platforms. Survey participants will be asked to include their email addresses at the end of the survey, should they be interested in being interviewed. With the central concern of this thesis being online social reading platforms, most of the collected data

will stem from such platforms and participants may be recruited or asked to contribute to this study via the platforms as well.

Furthermore, the time period of concern is the present, but the shift from the traditional, analog publishing industry to the more digitized one will also be investigated to an extent. Concerning the sample of this research, four organizations - Goodreads, Amazon, Wattpad and LibraryThing - will be researched, along with as many people as possible given the time frame of the research. Therefore, five interviews and as many surveys filled out as possible are the goals regarding data collection.

The data analysis in this research will also be conducted under a mixed methodology approach. Thematic analysis and statistical techniques through SPSS will be carried out on the collected data, in hopes of uncovering broader themes, the motivations of users on the various platforms, the cause-and-effect relationships between the different measured concepts, and as much interpretation of the participatory nature of the platforms as possible to reach an answer to the formulated research questions. The conducted interviews will be analysed using a qualitative thematic analysis, whilst the surveys will be quantitatively analysed using SPSS.

The reasons behind selecting thematic analysis for this study's qualitative methodology are, first, it allows for the segmentation of data, as well as the creation and categorization of codes - from textual data - into larger themes (Boeije, 2010). Second, thematic analysis allows for the in-depth interpretation of meanings and themes. By thematically analyzing the interviews, conversations about the digital publishing industry, participatory nature of the online social reading platforms and user behaviors will shed light on new interpretations and assessments of the social reading platforms than what has been discovered in previous scholarly research. Boeije (2010) states that the final product of thematic analysis is "possibly a coherent model or integrated explanation … of the social phenomenon that is studied" (p.79). In the case of this research, participatory culture and convergence culture are the main social phenomena. However, the thematic analysis will most likely also lead to explanations of the other theories discussed in the theoretical framework. This leads to the final point that thematic analysis allows for patterns to be identified within the collected data, which will make clear what kind of information and theoretical lenses are significant to online social reading platforms.

4.1 Online Social Reading Platforms
4.1.1 Goodreads

Commencing in January of 2007, Goodreads is an online social reading platform and digital library that was developed primarily for book lovers looking for a space to discover new works and add interesting books to their shelves. Its user base grew quite rapidly "from its inception with membership ballooning from 7 to 17 million users during 2012" (Murray, 2019, p.8). Out of all of the platforms being

investigated in this research, Goodreads is most likely the largest, as it "indisputably dominates online literary sociability with over 65 million users, 2 billion books catalogued, and 68 million reviews." (Murray, 2019, p.8) In 2013, Goodreads was purchased by global conglomerate Amazon for a possible 150 million US dollars (Murray, 2019). For purposes of clarity and effective investigation, Goodreads and Amazon will be treated as separate in this research. The two still remain separate websites and social platforms, and the only reference to Amazon on Goodreads comes from the link on a book's profile to purchase it. Interest in Goodreads is generated through their technological facilitation of book cataloging, reviewing, discussion and general social activities.

Based on observations of the platform, Goodreads has a section dedicated to the formation and membership in numerous groups. Examples of groups include 'Goodreads Librarians Group', 'Addicted to YA', 'Stephen King Fans' and 'Literary Fiction by People of Color'. Based on these examples, it is clear that there are a variety of groups that could possibly suit the literary tastes and consumption habits of different platform users. In a group, Goodreads users can see the time since the group's last activity, how many members there are, what the group is currently reading, group-based discussion board, group bookshelves and photos. There is a section dedicated to discussions, but the majority of the discussion boards are based on discussions started within a group. Goodreads has a quotes section which displays a multitude of quotes by famous authors and celebrities, as well as book quotes. The 'Ask the Author' section on Goodreads can be seen as an example of the boundaries between an author and a user being clearly marked. On the other hand, creating the possibility for authors to interact with users might also be seen as a blurring of boundaries. In this section, users can send questions to featured authors, the authors then select and answer questions, and users can like and comment on the authors' answers. A Goodreads 'Trivia and Quizzes' section features a never-ending book quiz about any book, quizzes related to a user's books, popular quizzes and leaderboards. The 'Creative Writing' section is similar to Wattpad, as will be made clear further along, in that it has numerous texts written by users and separated by categories and genres. This section is a prominent example of participatory and convergence cultures because of the spaces it opens up for users to become 'produser' and explore creative production with spaces for the advice, opinions and comments of other users. 'People' is another section on the website that makes visible the popular reviewers, top reviewers, top readers, most followed people, and the top librarians. The final section on Goodreads is 'Events', in which people and groups can create things such as author appearances, book club meetings, book swaps and more.

4.1.2 Amazon Books

Amazon is an important platform to investigate due to its history in the publishing industry. Amazon was founded on the premise of being an online book retailing company. It was founded in 1994

by Jeff Bezos and is now one of the leading global conglomerates that has branched out to include other media products such as television, film, music and more. Additionally, the company owns more than 40 subsidiaries. For purposes of this research, Amazon's books section is of primary concern. The social reading-related content is on the review sections of the various books that a consumer might want to purchase. Amazon reviews are seemingly more interested in the consumption-driven process of purchasing an item, rather than for the pleasure or enjoyment of discussing and interacting with other users about shared interests. There are most definitely some elements of engagement and enjoyment involved, however, purchasing decisions are generally at the core of Amazon book reviews. An observed example is of *The Midnight Library: A Novel* by Matt Haig. This book is an example of a popular work, which is made evident by the fact that Amazon.com reviewed it. Additionally, the book had opinion pieces by popular reviewers such as The New York Times, The Washington Post and more. Furthermore, customers can review the book by giving it a star rating out of five. Users can than mark customer reviews as helpful. There is the option to view a range of reviews by customers all at once, from low to high rating. Additionally, one can select tags of words - such as 'main character' - and the results will display reviews that mention such tags. There is limited social interaction between users on Amazon. Users can review books, which is a way through which they can interact with others and aid them in their consumer decisions.

4.1.3 LibraryThing

Similar to Goodreads, LibraryThing is an online social reading platform that began as a book-cataloging website. Founded in August of 2005, LibraryThing is a free platform where users can go to create a profile, join groups and chat in forums. The groups are similar to Goodreads, however, on LibraryThing the groups that were active throughout the week are those that are first presented to users. You also have sections dedicated to the presentation of all of the platform's groups, helper groups, groups suggested to users based on their platform behavior and users are free to browse through groups based on selected tags. If interested, a user can also decide to create their own group. An observed group on LibraryThing was '75 Books Challenge for 2021'. In the group, members are able to create threads where they share their 2021 reading goals, achievements and more. The platform has a similar layout to Goodreads. Other sections of the platform include 'Talk', by which a user is led to group forums; 'Local', which displays to users local venues, such as book stores, local events and libraries; 'More' is a section created by LibraryThing with site-related games such as 'Treasure Hunt' and 'Coverguess', newsletters, contests and more.

4.1.4 Wattpad

In 2006, the most encouraging and participation-based online social reading platform, Wattpad, was founded. This is a platform where users truly become 'produsers'. Throughout the platform, users are able to write their own books and short texts. There are numerous genres and categories throughout the platform that participants write about. The readers on the platform are also given spaces to comment on the various chapters or parts uploaded by 'produsers' on the platform. Therefore, there is a lot of interaction between users on the platform. Additionally, platform users can choose to follow one another and are given the option to post updates to display to their followers. Wattpad hosts a digital event called the 'Watty Awards' once every year. In these awards, the most popular, best written, editor's picks and most voted upon books receive awards. Over time, the platform began facilitating chances for 'produsers' to earn money on their works through advertisements. Later, Wattpad also created a pay-to-read account, through which users have to pay to access premium works. Originally, the platform was designed as a no advertisement, free-to-read one, however, an increase in popularity led to more income-generating features for the company and for the 'produsers' that create texts enjoyed by users on the platform. Wattpad has made it possible for regular, self-publishing users to profit from their creative labor.

4.2 Part I: Survey

4.2.1 Data Collection

To adequately and effectively create a survey investigating online social reading platforms, several academic sources with pre-existing scales were explored. After its construction, the survey was distributed throughout the four online social reading platforms by way of discussion boards, messaging group moderators to distribute it among their members and including a link to the survey in folders specific to people looking to fill out questionnaires. The survey generated 245 responses. The survey pertaining to this research was constructed by combining the questions and items of various pre-existing scales. The survey was categorized in the following way: demographics, media usage, reading motivation, technology and reading, online reviews, online reading platforms, and book clubs. The demographic questions were self-constructed and included as a means of investigating what kind of people are most active or least active in online social reading platforms. Demographics asked include age, gender, nationality and education level. Age, gender and education were categorically constructed. Age was split into seven categories from 'younger than 12' to '60 years or older'. Gender was categorized as 'male', 'female', 'non-binary/third gender' and 'prefer not to say'. Education level was categorized into seven categories: 'none', 'high school diploma', 'trade/technical/vocational training', 'bachelor's degree', 'master's degree', 'doctorate degree', and 'other'. Nationality, on the other hand, was created as a free

text entry box because of the possibility that some people have more than one nationality and to be as inclusive as possible.

The media usage questions were obtained from Dörrich (2014). The first three questions in the author's survey - found in their appendix - were included in this study's survey. The first question asks about the frequency of book genres people read, with 13 items ranging from 'crime' to 'poetry and drama' asked on a five-point likert scale with the choices being 'never', 'seldom', 'sometimes', 'often' and 'mostly' (Dörrich, 2014, p. I). The second question asks about the number of books people have read in the past three months during their free time, with the choice categories ranging from 'less than 3' to 'more than 20' (Dörrich, 2014, p. I). The third question asks respondents to determine the number of minutes they spent on various mediums in the previous day (Dörrich, 2014).

The one reading motivation scale was obtained from Schutte and Malouff's (2007) study on adult reading motivation. The scale has 21 items measured on a five-point likert scale from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. For the purpose of this study, only the overall reading motivation is measured, which Schutte and Malouff (2007) calculated as all the items. Therefore, scoring highly on any of the items would suggest a high reading motivation.

The technology and reading questions were obtained from Balling, et. al. (2019). Eleven questions were obtained. Their first question on using a mobile phone for reading asks respondents to select from the following categories: 'my phone does not allow reading beyond SMS', 'my phone allows reading (other than SMS) but I never read on it anyways', and 'I use my phone for reading (other than SMS)' (Balling, et. al, 2019, p.220). Additionally, questions 7-10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 36 and 37 from Balling, et. al (2019) were used in this study's survey asking whether respondents use a specific digital device - tablet, e-reader, laptop computer, desktop computer -, how often they use various technologies for reading the news, articles, narrative nonfiction and fiction, as well as how many print and e-books the respondents finished in the past 12 months. The questions on the frequency of reading different texts are all set-up as five-point Likert scales from 'never' to 'always.'

Two of the questions in the online reviews section of the survey were self-constructed to ask whether respondents have ever read comments or reviews on opinion platforms and if the respondents have ever written a review or comment on something they have read. The first of the two was constructed to ensure that the subsequent five-point Likert 'strongly disagree to strongly agree' scale by Hennig-Thurau, et. al, (2003) was relevant to the respondent. The second self-constructed question on writing reviews on something read was created as an indicator of digital user, specifically reader, behavior.

Almost all of the online reading platform questions were obtained from Dörrich (2014). The first question in this section was self-constructed to ask respondents which platforms, out of Goodreads, LibraryThing, Amazon Books and Wattpad, they have used, or if they have not used any. If they had not

used any, the subsequent questions on online reading platforms were not displayed to the respondents. Questions four, five and six of Dörrich's (2014) survey were used and adapted to suit the needs of this study. Dörrich (2014) analysed a platform called LovelyBooks, which is also an online social reading platform. The author questions what respondents use LovelyBooks for, which functions they believe are most important for that kind of website, and the extent to which respondents agree with statements about the platform (Dörrich, 2014, pp. II-III). To satisfy this study, the questions were all adapted to suit the functions and layouts of the four online social reading platforms central to this research.

Finally, the section on book clubs was included in this survey to generate answers to this research's sub question on traditional versus digital social reading. Most of the questions were retrieved from Elsayed's (2010) study of Arab book clubs. The first question in this study's survey, asking whether respondents are or have ever been book club members, was self-constructed to determine if they would continue onto the following questions or reach the end of the survey. In addition, the first question was also created to be an indicator of digital user behavior, like the writing reviews question that was previously mentioned. The questions obtained from Elsayed's (2010) study were questions 1, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 17 and 18. The questions asked about the book club goals, format, book selection process, book formats, book genres read, whether it has a moderator, moderator tasks, discussion methods and titles read per discussion.

Additionally, a concluding section was added to ask for comments or suggestions, as well as whether respondents were interested in taking part in an interview.

4.2.2 Data Analysis

To analyze the collected survey responses, SPSS will be used to carry out quantitative statistical analyses including summary statistics, correlations and regressions. According to Jensen (2020), "[n]umerical data analysis through statistical procedures… represents a systematic and objective way of determining whether significant patterns of relationships exist among those phenomena that have been measured in data collection" (p.230). In order to adequately assess whether patterns exist or not, several hypotheses were created to ensure that the correct central concepts and variables, with regard to this research, are statistically tested.

The first two hypotheses were constructed to assess the cause-effect relationships between using an online social reading platform and a respondent's digital user behavior. Specifically, these hypotheses address the main research question in their investigation of whether online social reading platforms reinforce a participatory culture, or at least prompt users to become more participatory. In this case, the question pertaining to the format of a respondent's book club - either 'face-to-face only', 'online only' or 'face-to-face and online' - was recoded into a new variable that assesses whether a respondent was part of

an online book club or not. The subsequent three hypotheses were constructed as a means of examining the moderating effect of online social reading platforms in the effect relationship between reading many books and being a member of a physical book club. These hypotheses were constructed to understand whether the number of books read in a year impacts a person's decision to become more participatory, and whether online social reading platforms play a role in how a person might become participatory. For example, a person might decide to become more participatory within traditional in-person social reading groups or digital social reading groups. To properly assess these three hypotheses, the previously mentioned question on book club formats was recoded into a new variable on whether a respondent was part of a physical book club or not.

Furthermore, according to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2015, the mean number of books read by an average American in one year is about 12 books (Perrin, 2015). Therefore, to effectively assess the third and fourth hypotheses, the survey questions on the amount of e-book and print books read over the course of 12 months will be recoded into a new variable of the total amount of books read over the course of 12 months. Subsequently, that new variable will be recoded into a new categorical one with two variables: '0' being 'fewer than 12 books' and '1' being '12 books or more'.

Regarding the data analysis process of the survey responses on SPSS, the collected data was exported to SPSS from Qualtrics, which is the tool that was used to create the survey. The data was then cleaned to exclude any incomplete or invalid survey responses, which led to a total of 229 clean survey responses. Following the data cleaning process, summary statistics were conducted for each of the 45 variables resulting from the survey. The summary statistics include frequencies and descriptives that generally measure the percentages, means, and standard deviations of the different variables. After the summary statistics, moderation analysis was conducted with the previously mentioned variables related to the last three hypotheses - which was only conducted when the variables were recoded.

4.3 Part II: Interviews

4.3.1 Data Collection

Prior to conducting the interviews. A semi-structured interview guide was created for interviews of around 30 minutes to an hour. As the interviews were constructed in a semi-structured format, the aim in the interview data collection processes was for the participants to elaborately answer some of the pre-constructed questions and for the interview to flow along with their answers. The interview begins with a short statement on the topic under investigation, ensuring participant anonymity and asking for consent. Prior to delving into questions about the topics at hand, several demographic questions were formulated to generate a profile of the participant and compare their answers to people with similar demographics, as well as the answers of survey respondents. The interview was divided based on the themes of reading

history and habits, technology use, social reading, and online social reading platforms. All of the questions were self-constructed, with many of them based off of survey questions to elicit more in-depth qualitative responses following the more categorical and quantitative survey answers. In the reading history and habits section, questions about the yearly book goals, reading enjoyment, reading purposes and reading favorites were included. In the technology use section, questions regarding everyday technology use, e-reader use and experiences in reading through digital screens were constructed. This section also includes a question about the participants' thoughts on the development of technologies, such as e-readers, regarding the publishing industry. The social reading section had questions about the participants' preferences regarding private reading versus social reading, whether they joined a book club and their experiences of it, and comparisons with physical and digital book clubs. The final section on online social reading platforms revolved around the use of at least one of the social reading platforms central to this research. Questions about their experiences in using the platforms, the kinds of communities visible throughout the platforms, their role on the platforms, creative production or 'produsage', along with producer versus user boundaries that could be noticed throughout the platforms. The questions were all constructed in a way that allows for further discussion or elaboration on the part of the interviewee. Whilst conducting the interview, notes were taken down to address new, relevant or interesting details mentioned by the participants that may have not been included in the interview guide. The interviewees were also asked whether they had any additional questions or comments related to the interview topic at the end of the interview.

4.3.2 Data Analysis

The data analysis of the interviews was conducted after the transcription of all the interviews. To effectively analyse the interviews, thematic analysis was selected as the qualitative method of choice. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), "[t]hematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p.79). The thematic analysis of the transcripts saw to it that open codes, axial codes and selective codes were generated in order to identify themes throughout the various interviews and to explore those themes along the lines of the formulated research questions.

As a first step, the interview transcripts were read and re-read as a means of gaining familiarity with the content and messages by the interview participants. Whilst reading the transcripts, initial observations and notes were recorded to ensure that no findings were left out of the coding process. The second step was to begin open coding. Open coding "involves the production of initial codes from the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.88). Labels were given to various extracts that were repeated or striking in the transcripts. This phase had a more inductive approach, in that it was mainly the data that led to the generation of labels. However, due to an awareness of the theoretical backing of this research, there was

also a slight deductive nature to the coding process. The third step in analysing the interviews involved the axial coding of the open codes. Axial coding is the generation of larger themes out of the smaller open codes found. In other words, axial coding is "sorting the different codes into potential themes and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.89). The fourth and final step in this analysis was to identify the wider selective codes that encapsulate the findings that arise out of the interview transcripts.

        The data analysis process was conducted by hand, in that the interview transcripts were printed. Subsequently, the transcripts were read over a number of times and notes were written down on the transcripts. Highlighters and colored index flags were used to mark interesting fragments of text, which were later labelled as open codes. The open codes were all written down and assessed against one another to create larger themes, or axial codes. The axial codes were then sorted into the grander analytical themes, the selective codes, that determined the overarching themes that were reiterated throughout all of the interviews.

5. Results

5.1 Survey

Regarding the survey sample, 245 total responses were recorded. However, after the data cleaning, *N = 229* were included in the subsequent analyses. The survey data was cleaned by removing any survey respondents that did not complete the questionnaire or fill in an answer for each question. Each variable was investigated to make sure that the answers were valid and usable. For the variables that required participants to fill in numbers, the numbers were adapted to be formatted in the same way, however, no values were changed.

Table I represents the key summary statistics on the central variables that were included in the survey data analysis. In the final, cleaned sample, 87.8% were women, 11.4% were men, 0.4% (*N=1*) of the sample were non-binary or a third gender, and 0.4% (*N=1*) preferred not to disclose their gender. To effectively do further analyses, only the female and male categories were kept, as a means of having a dichotomous variable to conduct regressions with. Regarding the respondents' age groupings, 6.1% were between 13-19 years of age, 21.4% were 20-29, 7.0% were 30-39, 39.7% were 40-49, 15.3% were 50-59, and those who were 60 years or older made up 10.5% of the sample. Generally, 40- to 49-year-olds made up the majority of the survey respondents (*N=91*). Respondents with bachelor's degrees made up the majority of the respondents, being 60.7% of the sample (*N=139*). The second most recorded education level was a master's degree (*N=47*) at 20.5%, followed by a High School diploma at 10.0% (*N=23*). 6.4% of the sample was composed of respondents with Doctorate degrees, 0.9% had no degree, 0.9% had a trade, technical or vocational training, and 0.4% marked their highest degree as 'other'.

Due to the demographic questions being optional, 46 (20.1%) respondents did not fill in their nationalities. However, a majority (27.1%) of the other respondents (*N=62*) filled in their nationality as Egyptian. The second most recorded nationality was American at 14.8% (*N=14.8*). In total, 39 nationalities were recorded. Nine respondents recorded dual nationalities.

To create general assumptions about the greater population and their likelihood to use online social reading platforms, a t-test was conducted to compare the means of gender in their use of at least one social reading platform. The output shows that women have a significantly higher score for using an online social reading platform (M = 0.86, SD = 0.35) than men (M = 0.65, SD = 0.49), *t* (28.40) = -2.16, p = .44.

As a means of testing hypotheses three, four and five, a moderation analysis was conducted. Figure 1 shows a conceptual framework of the moderation effect of online social reading platform use on the relationship between reading more than the average amount of books in one year and being a member of a physical book club.
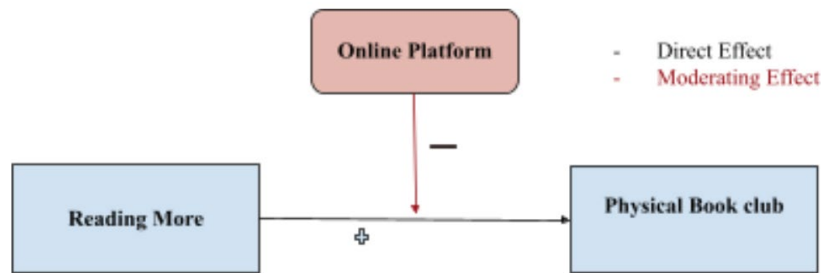
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

5.1.1 Moderation Analysis

The estimated effects are:

Physical Book Club = 1.871 - 0.728 * Reading more - 0.277 * Online social reading platforms + 0.741 * (Reading more * Online social reading platforms)

Which translate to:

Physical Book Club = 1.871 - 0.728 * Reading more   *if Online social reading platforms = 0*
Physical Book Club = 1.594 + 0.013 * Reading more   *if Online social reading platforms = 1*

Reading more refers to 'reading more than the average amount of books in one year', thus reading more than 12 books in one year. The ANOVA output of the regression analysis is significant at the 0.05 significance value (p = 0.013, F = 3.65). It was discovered in the comparison of the intercepts for both regressions - so using online social reading platforms = 0 or 1 -, that the probability of a respondent joining a physical book club when platform use equals 0 (0 = 1.871) is higher than when it equals 1 (1 = 1.594).

5.1.2 Hierarchical Linear Regression Analysis

To test the first hypothesis, a hierarchical linear regression with writing online reviews as the dependent variable. Table III (A) is representative of the results of the hierarchical regression analysis that was conducted on SPSS. Age, gender and education level were added in the first block as control variables, whilst using at least one online social reading platform was added in the second block. Gender (β = .02, p =.743), age (β = -.08, p =.257) and educational level (β = .03, p = .631) are all insignificant in the first block R^2=.01, F (3, 223) = .45, p = .711. Adding using at least one online social reading platform in the second block allowed the model to reach significance R^2=.10, F (4, 222) = 5.48, p <.001. Gender (β

= .07, p =.292), age (β = -.05, p =.416) and education level (β = -.00, p =.979) remained insignificant, while using at least one online social reading platform (β = -.30, p <.001) was significant. Therefore, it can be said that using at least one online social reading platform had a negative significant influence on writing reviews on things read. Therefore, both the first hypothesis and the null hypothesis are rejected. Instead, an alternative hypothesis suggesting that using at least one online social reading platform has a direct, negative effect on writing online reviews is accepted.

To test the second hypothesis, another hierarchical linear regression with being a member of an online book club as the dependent variable. Table III (B) is representative of the results of the hierarchical regression analysis that was conducted on SPSS. Age, gender and education level were added in the first block as control variables, whilst using at least one online social reading platform was added in the second block. Gender (β = -.16, p =.015) and age (β = .15, p =.029) were significant at the p <.05 level in the first block, whilst education level (β =- .03, p =.645) was insignificant. The first model was significant at the p <.05, R^2=.04, F (3, 223) = 3.04, p =.030. Adding using at least one online social reading platform in the second block led to a small increase in the significance of the model R^2=.06, F (4, 222) = 3.22, p =.013. Gender (β = -.14, p =.035) and age (β = .16, p =.019) remained significant at the p <.05 level, whilst education level (β = -.05, p =.495) remained insignificant. Using at least one online social reading platform (β = -.13, p =.057) was significant at the p < 0.10 level. Using at least one online social reading platform had a negative low significance influence on being a member of a digital book club. Therefore, the second hypothesis and null hypothesis is rejected. Instead, an alternative hypothesis proposing that using at least one online social reading platform has a weak, negative effect on being a member of an online book club is accepted.

5.1.3 Tables

Table I: Key Variables and Summary Statistics

Variables	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max	Type	Description
Dependent variables						
Physical Book Club Member (DV)	0.73	0.445	0	1	Binary	Indicates in a binary manner if a respondent is a physical book club member
Digital Book Club Member (DV)	0.76	0.428	0	1	Binary	Indicates in a binary manner if a respondent is a digital book club member
Writing Online Reviews (DV)	0.31	0.465	0	1	Binary	Indicates in a binary manner if a respondent writes online reviews
Explanatory variables						
Reading more than the average amount of books in one year	0.59	0.494	0	1	Binary	Indicates in a binary manner whether a respondent read more or less than 12 books in the past 12 months.
Using at least one online social reading platform (Moderating Variable)	0.83	0.373	0	1	Binary	Indicates in a binary manner if a respondent uses at least one online social reading platform
Control variables						
Age	4.68	1.398	2	7	1 to 7	Age category that a respondent falls under
Gender	1.90	0.355	1	4	1 to 4	Gender category that a respondent associates themselves with
Education Level	4.11	0.994	1	7	1 to 7	Highest level of education completed by a respondent

Number of Observations = 229

Table II: Correlation Matrix

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Age	1.000							
2 Gender	0.114	1.000						
3 Education Level	0.402	0.028	1.000					
4 Digital Book Club Member (DV)	-0.245	-0.146	-0.055	1.000				
5 Physical Book Club Member (DV)	-0.324	-0.043	-0.145	0.647	1.000			
6 Writing Online Reviews (DV)	-0.132	-0.011	-0.100	-0.016	-0.074	1.000		
7 Using at least one online social reading platform	0.088	0.145	-0.010	-0.113	-0.113	-0.279	1.000	
8 Reading more than the average amount of books in one year	0.243	0.106	0.054	-0.079	-0.034	-0.384	0.363	1.000

This table represents a correlation analysis that was conducted to test whether the main variables had any relationship to one another. The most striking results from the table are that being a digital book club member and being a physical book club member had strong, negative correlations with age. Age and writing online reviews had a weak, negative correlation. Age and reading more than the average amount of books in one year had a strong, positive correlation. Gender and being a digital book club member had a weak, negative correlation. Gender and using at least one online social reading platform had a weak, positive correlation. Education level and being a physical book club member had a weak, negative correlation. Being a digital book club member had a strong, positive correlation with being a physical

book club member. Writing online reviews had strong, negative correlations with using at least one online social reading platform and reading more than the average amount of books in one year. Finally, reading more than the average amount of books in one year had a strong, positive correlation with using at least one online social reading platform.

Table III: Hierarchical Linear Regression

A: Regression Analysis Summary for Using At Least One Online Social Reading Platform predicting Writing Online Reviews

	Model 1 (Control Variables)		Model 2	
Variable	**Coefficient**	**Standard Error**	**Coefficient**	**Standard Error**
Online social reading platform (0=None, 1=At least one)			-0.30***	0.08
Gender (0=Male, 1=Female)	0.02	0.01	0.07	0.10
Age (0=Other age groups, 1=40-49-year-olds)	-0.08	0.07	-0.05	0.06
Education Level (0=Other degrees, 1=Bachelor's degree)	0.03	0.07	-0.00	0.06
	$R^2 = 0.01$		$R^2 = 0.10$	
	R^2 Change $= 0.01$		R^2 Change $= 0.08$	

*$p < 0.10$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.001$

B: Regression Analysis Summary for Using At Least One Online Social Reading Platform predicting Being a Digital Book Club Member

	Model 1 (Control Variables)		Model 2	
Variable	**Coefficient**	**Standard Error**	**Coefficient**	**Standard Error**
Online social reading platform (0=None, 1=At least one)			-0.13*	0.08
Gender (0=Male, 1=Female)	-0.16**	0.09	-0.14**	0.10
Age (0=Other age groups, 1=40-49-year-olds)	0.15**	0.06	0.16**	0.06
Education Level (0=Other degrees, 1=Bachelor's degree)	-0.03	0.06	-0.05	0.06
	$R^2 = 0.04$ R^2 Change = 0.03		$R^2 = 0.06$ R^2 Change = 0.04	

*p < 0.10, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.001

5.1.4 Hypothesis Results

Number	Hypothesis	Accepted/Rejected
H1	Using at least one online social reading platform has a direct, positive effect on writing online reviews.	Alternative hypothesis is accepted. = Using at least one online social reading platform has a direct, negative effect on writing online reviews.
H2	Using at least one online social reading platform has a direct, positive effect on being a member of an online format book club	Alternative hypothesis is accepted. = Using at least one online social reading platform has a weak, negative effect on being a member of an online book club.
H3	Reading more than the average amount of books in one year has a direct, positive effect on being a member of a physical book club.	This hypothesis is rejected. The relationship between the two variables is insignificant. R^2=.00, $F (1, 227) = .27$, $p =.605$. The null hypothesis is accepted.

H4	Reading more than the average amount of books in one year has a direct, positive effect on using at least one online social reading platform.	The hypothesis is accepted. The relationship between the two variables is a positive, significant one. $R^2 = .13$, $F(1, 227) = 34.45$, $p < .001$.
H5	Using at least one online social reading platform has a moderating, negative effect on being a member of a physical book club.	Hypothesis is accepted according to the moderation analysis.

5.2 Interviews

Regarding the interview sample, a total of five interview participants were approached and interviewed for their thoughts on and insight into online social reading platforms. The participants, hereafter referred to as Interviewee A to E, are representatives of several age groups, education levels, nationalities and professions. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes, with only one interview taking significantly less time: interview C being 16:11 minutes. The longest interview was interview A, which lasted 39:24 minutes. All of the participants were female, and all considered themselves book lovers or avid readers. Interviewee A is a 24-year-old marketing specialist from the United States of America who considers her hobbies to be reading, playing video games and skiing. Interviewee B is a 40-year-old fiction writer from the United States of America, who works in education and considers her hobbies to be reading, writing, sports and the arts. Interviewee C is a 19-year-old undergraduate political sciences student from Egypt, who considers reading to be her main hobby. Interviewee D is a 23-year-old graduate student from Armenia, who finds reading, watching movies, painting and meeting with friends to be her hobbies. Finally, interviewee E is a 19-year-old psychology student from Austria, who reads, listens to music, and hangs out with friends as hobbies.

Each interview participant uses at least one online social reading platform and were asked questions related to each platform. The interviews flowed depending on their level of participation on the platforms, their social reading activities and the extent of their elaboration to each question. Regarding the breadth of each participant's readership, interviewees A and C aim to read about 100 books a year, interviewees B and D aim to read between 25 to 30 books a year and interviewee E aims to read about five or six books a year. Based on the aforementioned yearly books read average of 12 books, four out of five of the interviewees read more than the average figure and can thus be considered fervent readers. In comparison to the survey results, however, interviewees B and D are nearly representative of the average

survey respondent because the mean number of books read over the course of 12 months in this case is 22.

Additionally, the participants were asked about their favorite genres. Interviewee A's favorite genre is fiction, but within fiction the participant enjoys mystery, fantasy and historical fiction. Interviewee B enjoys literary fiction as well, specifically realistic fiction rather than fantasy-type narratives. Interviewee C indicated that her favorite genres were fantasy and fiction. Interviewee D's favorite genres are young adult fiction, romance, historical fiction, poetry and drama. Finally, interviewee E's favorite genres are fantasy, young adult fiction, romance, nonfiction and the classics. Therefore, overall, it is clear that each participant is a fiction lover, albeit that their fiction preferences vary.

Furthermore, each interviewee was asked about their most used every day digital device as a means of comparing the answers with those of the survey respondents. Generally, each interviewee responded that their mobile phone was their most used digital device, with three of the interviewees mentioning that they also used their laptops consistently. The interviews are in line with the survey results, in which most respondents use both their mobile phones and laptop computers more than other digital devices.

Concerning whether the participants take part in any form of social reading groups or not, each participant is or was formally or informally part of a social reading group. Interviewee A is the moderator of an online Goodreads book club called 'Addicted to YA'. Interviewee B attempted to join a couple of book clubs in the past and formed 'literature circles' as part of her role as an educator. Interviewee C is a member of one Facebook book group. Interviewee D was a part of an informal book exchange. Interviewee E was a member of a primary school-based book club. Therefore, each interviewee was able to describe a different social reading group experience, which highlights the vast and diverse nature of the social book world.

Moreover, the central concern of this research is on the participatory nature of online social reading platforms, which meant that the interviewees all needed to have been a part of at least one of the four platforms under investigation. Interviewee A has used and participated in both Goodreads and Amazon Books. Interviewee B used LibraryThing in the past and currently uses Goodreads. Interviewee C used Amazon Books, Goodreads and Wattpad. Interviewee D used Goodreads and Wattpad. Interviewee E also used Goodreads and Wattpad. Goodreads is the only platform that was or currently is being used by each of the interview participants, which might be an indicator of the platform's popularity.

After printing out the five transcribed interviews, the transcriptions were read through multiple times in order to develop meaningful thematic codes. Overall, the coding process led to the generation of 26 open codes, 11 axial codes and six selective codes. The six selective codes, and the overarching themes that are representative of the interview results, are information worlds, social worlds, convergence

culture, Covid-19, the digital versus analogue, and reading experience. As previously mentioned, the data analysis process involved both inductive and deductive approaches to the interview transcripts. Therefore, three of the selective codes are based on theories referred to in this paper's theoretical framework. All of the codes are indicative of the nature of participation in the book world, publishing industry and online social reading platforms. The following subsections detail the formation of the selective codes, including the open and axial codes that developed out of the data. Appendix C displays a coding table with the open, axial and selective codes, along with extracts of data that the 26 open codes symbolize.

5.2.1 Information Worlds

The first selective code that was developed was *information worlds*. There are a number of reasons as to why the theme was labelled as such, most of which stem from the theory of information worlds by Jaeger and Burnett (2010). The axial and open codes that can be spotted in figure 2 all generally fall within the theoretical scope of Jaeger and Burnett's (2010) notion. To reiterate the five central assumptions of an information world, social norms, social types, information value, information behavior and boundaries are representative of what the interview participants discussed, specifically in reference to the online social reading platforms they used. Three open codes were generated as a starting point for the creation of this theme. These codes were 'information sharing in online social reading platforms', 'sharing reading experiences with others', as well as 'building and maintaining digital relationships'. The first two were then further coded as 'information behavior', whilst the last open code fell under the 'socialization' axial code.
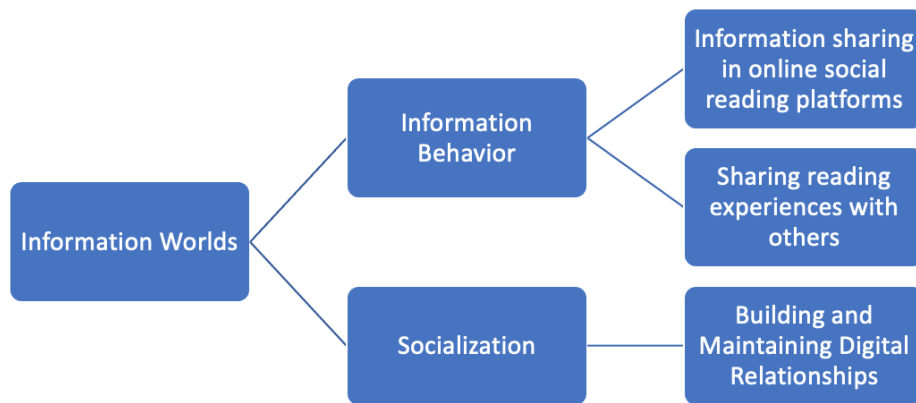
Figure 2. Visual of the 'Information Worlds' Selective, Axial and Open Codes

5.2.1.1 Information Behavior. The two open codes, generated prior to the development of the 'information behavior' axial code, are 'information sharing in online social reading platforms' and 'sharing reading experiences with others'. Information sharing and information behavior are theoretically related to the characteristics of an information world, as touched upon by Worrall (2016). The codes in

this axial code were deductively created. The first open code, 'information sharing', was labelled against fragments in which the interviewees discussed the ways in which the platforms they joined or social reading they took part in included an element of knowledge sharing. For example, interviewee E states that "it's nice to be able to have, like, different people commenting and then putting their opinions, like sharing these books and sharing recommendations for different books on the site" (23:20). Interviewee E says this in specific reference to Wattpad, however, it could also be applied to the other three online social reading platforms.

The second open code under 'information behavior' is 'sharing reading experiences with others'. This open code refers to seeking of others to share a connection, similar interests or impressions of a book with others. The difference between this code and the previous one is that information sharing is specifically regarding the exchange of knowledge and insight, whilst sharing a reading experience can be anything from sharing joy or excitement with others or reading at the same time as others. For example, interviewee D mentions how "there's like some books that everyone's talking about and you kind of feel left out if you don't read it, like I guess like I that's how I start reading" (15:34). Another example is interviewee E and her aim to find friends that read the same text to relate her reading experience with others.

5.2.1.2 Socialization. 'Building and maintaining digital relationships' is the sole open code underneath the umbrella axial code of 'socialization'. Building and maintaining digital relationships is something that each of the participants touched upon in some way. Interviewee A mentioned how the creation of her digital book club was originally meant to be a way to maintain a long-distance friendship. "So we created a group on Goodreads for the two of us and we just left it public for anyone to join. And it's just become this giant thing over the years" (Interviewee A, 16:21).

This code also refers to the development of relationships as a byproduct of the participants' platform use. Interviewee D refers to how "there is a few people who like we became friends on Goodreads and then it's just like book recommendations back and forth," (27:19). The digital relationships might be book-related or book-based, but they are relationships that develop, nonetheless.

The 'socialization' axial code was generated out of this open code because being 'social' is at the core of the research platforms, which are built with the intention to connect users to one another and create interest-based relationships. The 'socialization' code was assigned to the wider 'information worlds' selective code, rather than the 'social worlds' selective code, because being social relates to two out of five central notions in information worlds, as outlined by Worrall (2016); social norms and social types. Additionally, the social worlds theory by Strauss (1978) is more concerned with the social spaces rather than the act of socialization itself.

5.2.2 Social Worlds

Along these lines, the second selective code is social worlds, which was based off of Strauss's (1978) social worlds theory. The social worlds theory outlines the organizational spaces in which activities occur with the aid of technology. The online social reading platforms under investigation can all be considered social worlds, which is reinforced by the five conducted interviews. Within the umbrella of social worlds, the following three axial codes were developed out of seven open codes: 'critique of online platforms', 'platform function', 'social media'. The seven open codes are: 'being critical of the platforms', 'corporatization (capitalistic-nature) of the platforms', 'appreciation of platform features', 'author profiles', 'platform premise', 'reliance on users for functioning of the platforms', and 'connecting reading with social media platforms'. The following figure is representative of the codes within the overarching theme of 'social worlds'.
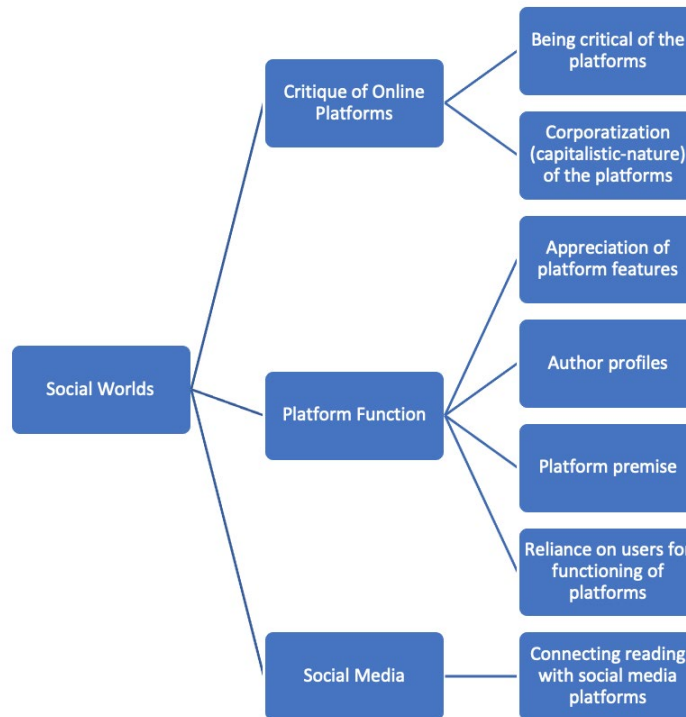
Figure 3. Visual of the 'Social Worlds' Selective, Axial and Open Codes

5.2.2.1 Critique of Online Platforms. The first axial code within the 'social worlds' theme is 'critique of online platforms'. Some of the interviewees had many critical remarks regarding the development of the online social reading platforms, as well as the ownership and corporatization of the

platforms. Interviewee B was critical of the ownership changes in Goodreads, specifically its acquisition by Amazon.

> "So Amazon, Google, Facebook, I love them all, but they're all a bit out of control, too, right? So, I mean, if Amazon, especially during a pandemic, has just I mean, especially Jeff Bezos has become so much richer. And I think if he was paying more tax and giving more back, I'd be OK with that." (Interviewee B, 25:22)

The critique is larger than the online social reading platform itself, as well as its features. This critique touches upon the expansiveness of Amazon and its technologies, without necessarily having positive contribution in return, according to the interviewee. This falls underneath 'social worlds' because the interviewee refers to the organization at the core of the social world's operations.

Interviewee E, on the other hand, directly critiques one of the platforms and the changes in its offerings.

> "I think more recently, Wattpad's turned into a bit more of like a corporate kind of like professional thing that I don't really value as much anymore, like I liked when it was very much by the users for the users" (Interviewee E, 27:44)

In this case, the interviewee is critical of the change in direction that Wattpad has taken. Originally, the platform was all free, but over time it began implementing a pay-to-read system that allows 'produsers' to benefit from their creative labor.

5.2.2.2 Platform Function. The next axial code under this theme is 'platform function', which covers a number of smaller open codes. This axial code was generated on the basis of several references by the interviewees on the value that the participants perceived in the platform features, author profiles, the premise of the platforms, and the reliance that platforms have on users for their functioning. When participants discussed the value of some platform features, there was often a tone of appreciation that came along with what they said. For example, interviewee D shared her excitement about the yearly reading challenge that Goodreads offers.

> "I don't know why, but the reading challenge always makes me so happy because I don't know if it's my competitive nature, but I'm always like, I have to have that, like, oh, 70 percent done. And I'm just like, yes. So I do think that's like one of the one of the features of Goodreads that I enjoy the most." (Interviewee D, 32:20)

Other features that users appreciated include the ability to message 'produsers' on Wattpad, the lists section of Goodreads and the reviews section in Amazon Books. None of the interviewees were very familiar with LibraryThing and its features. Interviewee B used it in the past but does not necessarily remember or know about the current platform features.

Author profiles were consistently mentioned throughout the interviews, especially upon being asked about whether the interviewees noticed any boundaries between users and producers on the platforms. From the perspective of a producer, interviewee B discussed the desire for separate author profiles on Goodreads, similar to the business profiles that one can create on Instagram. Interviewee A, on the other hand, discusses the fact that there are author profiles on Goodreads through which "they can just post sort of general updates about their life for like where they are in their manuscript, and sometimes they'll also post sort of like annotations or like fun facts about a book as you go through it" (Interviewee A, 32:25). Interviewee A is a more active participant on Goodreads than interviewee B, which could account for the fact that interviewee B was not particularly aware of such profiles.

Regarding the 'platform premise' open code, the interviewees touched upon the purpose and essence of a couple of the platforms, namely Goodreads and Wattpad. Interviewee E reveals her frustrations at the changing nature of Wattpad, following its original structure and premise.

> "Wattpad was just about like a like casual informal way of like people sharing what they've written and their love of reading or whatever which is like reciprocated I guess between everyone." (Interviewee E, 27:44)

This is somewhat related to the next open code of 'reliance on users for functioning of platforms'. The original premise of Wattpad, as explained by interviewee E, is users creating for other users to consume. Wattpad, in this regard, relies on the active contribution of users to be a successful and functioning platform.

5.2.2.3 Social Media. The last axial code under the theme of 'social worlds' is 'social media'. This was an interesting code because every interviewee mentioned either reading or the online social reading platforms in relation to a social media platform, such as Instagram, Facebook or TikTok. With digital devices and internet-based platforms gaining increasing popularity, it seems natural that the interviewees would bring them up. However, it is interesting that they brought the platforms up in a discussion on their reading habits and behaviors. Some interviewees only brought up the social media platforms after being asked about the central online social reading platforms. However, a few, such as interviewee D, brought up social media platforms like YouTube and Whatsapp after being asked about the first thing they do after finishing a book they had deeply enjoyed. "I Whatsapp my friends. And I'm like, 'you should read this book'. [...] And then the next thing is like I share with my friends and sometimes I like go on YouTube and watch other people's reviews and stuff" (Interviewee D, 14:40). Interviewee A mentioned Instagram as the first thing she goes to after finishing a deeply enjoyable book. "The first thing I do is I post to a story on my Instagram, which is just for books" (Interviewee A, 9:40).

The 'social media' axial code was added to the social worlds theme because the various platforms that were mentioned throughout the interviews can also be considered social worlds, based on the characteristics outlined by Worrall (2015).

5.2.3 Convergence Culture

The third grand theme, or selective code, extracted from the thematic analysis of the interviews is 'convergence culture'. This is the third and final selective code that is more deductive in its construction. As discussed in the theoretical framework, a convergence culture is one in which the borders between users and producers are blurred, specifically in a culture of participation (Deuze, 2007).

Seven open codes were generated in the initial stages of the creation of this theme. These codes were 'consuming user-generated content', 'creating content out of a reading experience', 'platforms allowing for user creativity and production', 'boundaries in online social reading platform use', 'impact of user behavior on a platform', 'active user behavior', and 'passive user behavior'.
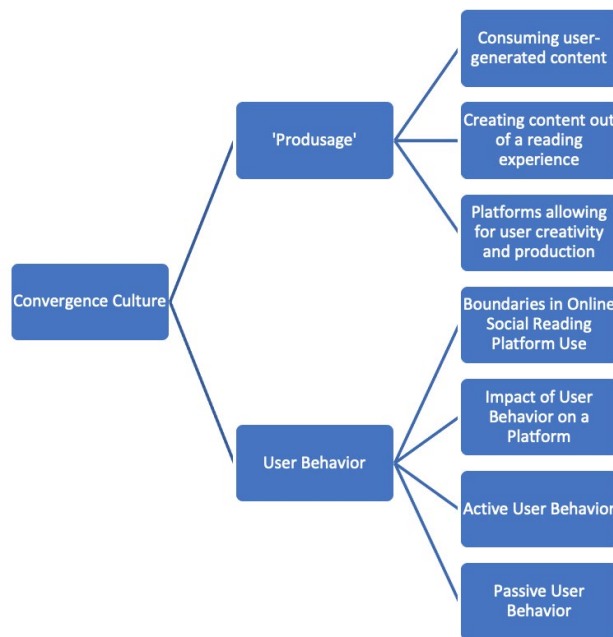
Figure 4. Visual of the 'Convergence Culture' Selective, Axial and Open Codes

5.2.3.1 'Produsage'. The first axial code under the 'convergence culture' umbrella is 'produsage'. Three open codes led to the development of this axial code: 'consuming user-generated content', 'creating content out of a reading experience', and 'platforms allowing for user creativity and production'. All of these codes allude to the ability for users to create or produce, which is at the heart of convergence culture. It is the ability for users to become producers, without the traditional boundaries being in place. The online social reading platforms are spaces in which users can create, and, therefore,

consume content by other users. Interviewee C highlights how Wattpad is a great space for the consumption of user-generated content because "all you need to write a book is just to click a button" (Interviewee C, 14:08). Along these lines, a space like Goodreads offers the possibility to create content out of a reading experience because, aside from writing creative reviews on books read,

> "it's a great way to meet other people. And if they have a blog or if you have a blog, then you can sort of like take what you like and talk about it on Goodreads and create something offline."
>
> (Interviewee A, 31:23)

A space like Goodreads also allows for user creativity and production, which is reiterated by interviewee A when she discusses the groups feature of Goodreads. "Goodreads has a section of the site where they have all of the infrastructure for a group, but a user has to go and create a group" (Interviewee A, 32:25).

5.2.3.2 Boundaries in Online Social Reading Platform Use. This first open code under 'user behavior' was touched upon many times amongst all the interviews. Boundaries not only refer to the possible divide between consumers and producers on the platforms, but also between book club moderators and members; personal boundaries; and between users in general. Additionally, there are also boundaries, or a lack thereof, between different online platforms, which was an interesting topic to discuss with some of the interviewees.

Interviewee E discussed the personal boundaries that influenced her behavior in her use of Wattpad. "Sometimes I'd like write a little bit like wasn't good and that definitely stopped" (Interviewee E, 21:17). In terms of participation, this specific personal boundary limited the extent to interviewee E's active participation on the platform. Interviewee D, on the other hand, discusses the boundaries in the online social reading platforms between users and authors, from the perspective of a user.

> "I do think there is a boundary because while you can still, like, talk to other users, I don't know if you can talk to authors and stuff. So I do think there's like a I don't know how to call it like a power imbalance. Like they're more like not accessible for like general users" (Interviewee D, 30:42).

In this context, boundaries are perceived between digital consumers and producers as a lack of accessibility but reflects upon the boundary by suggesting that the platform intentions are what create these differences in access, "granted, Goodreads is more of a book app whereas TikTok is more of a social app" (Interviewee D, 30:42).

Interviewee B explores the same boundary between users and authors, but from an authorial perspective. This participant wrote a book on a person with a brain tumor, after which a forum was created on Goodreads with users sharing their own experiences with having brain tumors. "I felt a little bit strange. I decided not to engage with the forum because I thought, OK, I wrote a book on this based on

somebody I know and her feelings and we talked about it, but I didn't feel like an expert on it" (Interviewee B, 22:53). In this case, the boundary is both personal as well as between users and producers.

Interviewee A has the unique perspective of an online book club moderator, which led to her reflection of the boundaries between herself and the members of the book club. This participant discusses the boundaries in terms of the responsibilities that moderators have in comparison to regular members. For example, "making sure that spam or harassment is dealt with in a timely manner, in a respectful manner" (Interviewee A, 19:21), which is a representation of the authority one user has on another.

This open code falls under the axial code of 'user behavior' because the perceived boundaries discussed by the participants influenced their behavior on the online social reading platforms, either by preventing them from doing something or pushing them into behaving in a certain manner on the platforms.

5.2.3.3 Impact of user behavior on a platform, active user behavior and passive user behavior. The following three open codes that fall within the scope of the 'user behavior' axial code all directly refer to the participants' user behaviors. The first of the three refers to the influence that user behaviors might have on the platforms. For example, interviewee A explained the benefit that some Goodreads user behaviors might have.

> "Goodreads doesn't have like an internal filing system. You'll notice it if you go to like a new book that doesn't have like ratings or anything yet the like the genre side could be blank until other people start logging it and it goes into like common folders [...] like a sort of communal filing system" (Interviewee A, 29:26)

Interestingly, should users decide to not act in the best interest of other users, the Goodreads database would be lacking and might negatively impact the success of the platform. The same could be said for Wattpad because if users decided to not contribute or participate, the platform would have most likely not seen any success.

The second of the three codes is 'active user behavior', which touches upon the active behavior or interactions that the interview participants had on the online social reading platforms. Examples of active behavior include writing online reviews, commenting on posts or being contributory in digital groups. Interviewee A is one example of a participant with high active user behavior because of her mentioning of the activities she consistently carries out on Goodreads. "I pretty much go on daily just because I am a moderator [...] for my personal reading aspect, I probably go on every couple of days just to, like, keep it updated because I like to use Goodreads to track all my personal reading" (Interviewee A, 28:06).

The third code is 'passive user behavior', which is opposite to the previous code, because users

that are passive do not necessarily engage with others on the platforms. These behaviors include reading content and engaging in simple personal site activity. For example, interviewee C states the following: "Yeah, I see what they're reading, and I read the same, I don't necessarily participate" (Interviewee C, 08:42).

5.2.4 Covid-19

Due to the global pandemic during which this research has taken place, it was expected that the interviewees would bring up some of their experiences with Covid-19 and its impact on their lives or readership. 'Covid-19' was given its own selective, axial and open codes because it cannot be grouped underneath any other themes. There was an impact of Covid-19 on the interviewees and the growth of the platforms, but the online social reading platforms did not have any impact or influence on the pandemic.

Figure 5. Visual of the 'Convergence Culture' Selective, Axial and Open Codes

Interviewee E mentions the disinterest that she began to develop towards digital spheres and online activities after spending a year reorienting life to become more digital and internet-based, which has an impact on her willingness to join digital social reading activities. "Sometimes, I don't know, especially after the past year anything online just has become a bit tedious in my head" (Interviewee E, 18:43). Interviewee A holds the pandemic responsible for the increase in her e-reading and digital device use. Interviewee B suggests that platforms, such as Goodreads, are great spaces to escape the dreariness of life during the pandemic.

5.2.5 The Digital Versus Analogue

The fifth selective code, 'the digital versus analogue', is very applicable to this research's sub question on traditional versus online social reading. The larger theme has two axial codes within its umbrella: 'print and offline', as well as 'technological impact'. There were six open codes that were generated out of the data to develop the axial and selective codes. The interviewees brought up many things related to physical social reading, engaging with traditional reading, the common judgement of the 'death of the print book', the convenience of digital mediums and tools, the impact that technology has on the book industry, along with the importance of data privacy. The two axial codes are representative of two opposite sides of the book industry, the traditional, print-based side and the digitally based one.
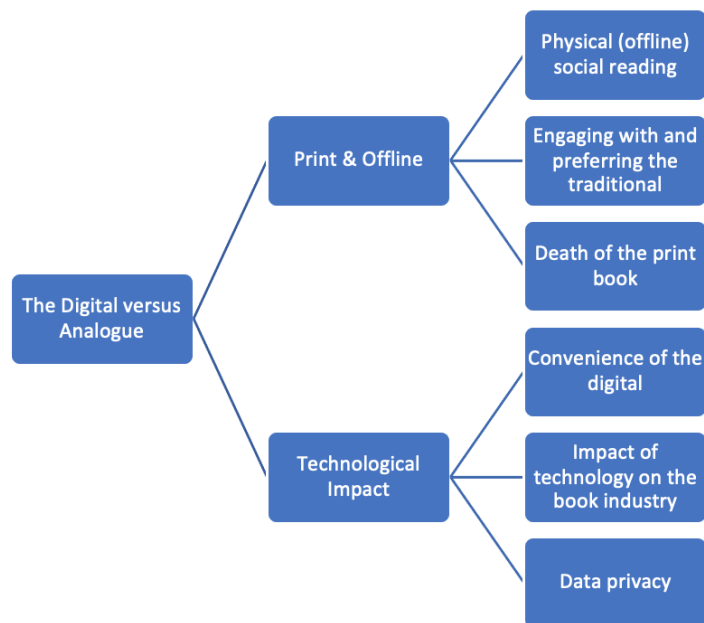
Figure 6. Visual of the 'Convergence Culture' Selective, Axial and Open Codes

5.2.5.1 Print & Offline. This axial code is made up of three open codes, namely 'physical (offline) social reading', 'engaging with and preferring the traditional', and 'death of the print book'. Physical social reading is representative of activities or groups, based in person, that the participants took part in to further the extent of their readership and book-related sociability. In comparison to the survey respondents, the majority of which did not take part in a physical book club, three out of five of the interview participants took part in some form of physical social reading in their lifetimes. Interviewee E was a part of a school-based book club, in which they would,

> "meet a couple of times a week in the mornings and like, we'd all have a book. I don't know. I can't remember if it was like every month or every couple of weeks or we'd have a book. And like we'd read it, we'd read it all together. Like at this, like at a table, we'd all sit in like a round circle and read the book together and stuff. After each like, I don't know, a couple of chapters or something, we'd come and talk about our thoughts and how the book is progressing" (Interviewee E, 15:48).

This type of physical social reading experience is unlike one that could be done digitally because it is a silent reading then discussion-type of experience. Digitally, any silent reading that is done is more often than not done alone, without the company of others, and then people would interact digitally about the passages or books they read. Interviewee E also highlights her preference for the physical format, which links to the second open code, 'engaging with and preferring the traditional'. "I like things being in person and being able to discuss in person rather than online" (Interviewee E, 18:43), and this comes prior

to the participant tying a preference for the analogue or in person social experiences to the pandemic, as was previously alluded to.

Interviewee B referred to an interesting format of physical social reading, which she calls 'literature circles'. Due to her educational background and profession, the participant discusses literature circles in relation to her students.

> "maybe four or five students who would have a book from the library that we had enough copies of and we'd kind of move it around, but then it extended to engagement with what they were reading outside of these literature circles" (Interviewee B, 19:16).

This type of physical social reading is similar to that experienced by Interviewee E. However, the circles discussed by Interviewee B were meant to be activities that inspired and engaged others to read, rather than social experiences solely created for people with a deep interest for books.

The third open code under the 'print and offline' axial code is 'death of the print book'. Nearly every participant, other than Interviewee A, mentioned the long-standing perception of the death of the print book. The participants referred to this conception upon being asked about their thoughts regarding the development of technologies in relation to the publishing industry. Interviewee E, for example, suggested that

> "the whole like like narrative of like printed media is dead, [...], as much as it's kind of true because like everybody is replacing these printed mediums with technology now [...] So we adapt, like we reframe like our mindset to fit into these advancements and to fit into a new idea of like what printed media is or like what publishing is" (Interviewee E, 11:08).

According to this participant, the natural development of technologies is coupled by people adapting to change. Therefore, whilst digitalization might have an impact on the print and publishing industries, the understanding of what a book is also shifts. This idea also falls in line with Murray's (2019) text and her focus on the shifting in book formats, from paper to digital.

5.2.5.2 Technological Impact. This line of thought ties to the next axial code, 'technological impact'. This code was developed out of three open codes that are related to technology, its convenience, impact and the importance of data privacy. The interview participants discussed the convenience of digital devices and formats numerous times throughout their interviews. Specifically, when asked about their digital device use for reading, the participants often indicated that reading over devices, such as mobile phones, was more convenient to print books. Interviewee C explains how "it's much easier. I can read wherever, I don't have to constantly have a book around me since I always have my phone anyway, so it's much easier" (05:23). Interviewee B touches upon the convenience of digital platforms, like Goodreads,

"I kind of keep track of what's on my bookshelf, which is always really long and because I'm always between a lot of books and I just really like it to kind of keep track also what I've read, I used to kind of do this in a paper journal, but what I like is then you can get other suggestions, you can more easily share it with other people" (Interviewee B, 20:58).

Therefore, the ease that digital devices or platforms create is incentive enough for many of the participants to choose digital mediums, regardless of their preferences for print.

The impact of technology on various facets of the publishing industry was also referred to a number of times. Interviewee B provides a more positive outlook on the impact of technology on the publishing industry, which might also be linked to her being an author herself.

"maybe the critics that I read who are talking about, like people who are book lovers like me, who are like, oh, man, like all this e-publishing. I think maybe they're not looking at the real story, which is that it's allowing more people to be published as well, which I think is great" (Interviewee B, 12:20).

However, this participant does also discuss the downside of the growth of technological processes in the publishing industry, namely the problematic nature of data privacy. "But the other the other thing is this kind of like taking data. I think we kind of need to be careful about that. And I think Europe's doing a better job about data privacy than the US, for example" (Interviewee B, 25:22).

Overall, this selective code encompasses the digital-print push and pull that the participants might be feeling in their reading habits and engagement. The interviewees provided the benefits and disadvantages of both sides of the publishing coin, creating an interesting dynamic and understanding of the traditional versus digital reading discussion.

5.2.6 Reading Experience

The final selective code developed out of the thematic analysis is 'reading experience'. This theme is related to the participants and their readership. Only one axial code falls within the larger theme, which is 'being a reader'. The axial code is composed of two open codes: 'reading and the self' and 'private reading versus social reading'. These codes are interested in the participant and their reading behaviors, unrelated to their participation on digital platforms. This code is indicative of what the interviewees prefer in their reading habits.
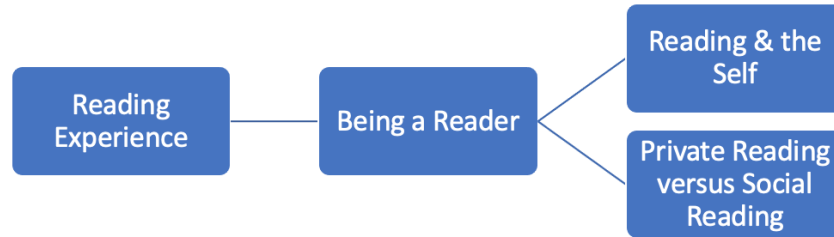
Figure 7. Visual of the 'Convergence Culture' Selective, Axial and Open Codes

The two open codes create a comparison between a reader and their personal, private reading habits and experience with any social reading they might be a part of. 'Reading and the self' includes the reading motivations, preferences and personal attachments to reading. For instance, interviewee E explained the following:

"if I spend a lot of time reading these academic articles all the time for my studies, I'm less inclined or less motivated to go and read for my personal benefit or fun or whatever, just because I feel like I'm so burnt out from reading already, that it's like this is not what I want to be doing to, like, fill up my free time" (Interviewee E, 02:12).

In this case, even though the participant considers herself to be a lover of books, the intensity of academic reading influences her relationship with reading. The interviewees also discussed the reasons they take up reading, whether it be leisurely or for self-development. Interviewee E reads for self-growth and to explore her interests in psychology further. Interviewee D reads out of a desire to escape and immerse herself in new fictional worlds. Interviewee C reads for leisure and to develop her vocabulary. Interviewee B reads to grapple with various ideas and to become well informed. Interviewee A reads to find leisure and entertainment but learns about self-development through the fiction texts she explores.

The second open code within the larger 'reading experience' theme is 'private reading versus social reading'. This code was labelled against passages in which the interview participants indicate whether they prefer reading as a private act or with the inclusion of social elements. Interviewee E described how "I'd say when I'm first reading a book, I'd rather just do it by myself and like be able to form my own thoughts and opinions about what I've read and kind of like enjoy that whole process myself afterwards" (14:38). Interviewee C can be related to interviewee E's line of thought because she enjoys taking time to herself before engaging with others about what was read. Interviewee D, on the other hand, explained how participating in digital social reading was the first thing she did after finishing a book, and that the discussion part of her reading experience is most preferred.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated the extent to which online social reading platforms reinforce a participatory culture. In other words, the investigation was concerned with the level of engagement, activity, involvement and contribution that the users of online social reading platforms had in online social reading platforms, and whether that was all prompted by the platforms themselves. The central research questions were: in what ways do online social reading platforms reinforce a participatory culture, and to what extent do user behaviors change among various platforms? Additionally, a sub question was: does online social reading fill a missing gap in traditional social reading, and vice versa? The study is framed by several theories from various academics, specifically: participatory culture (Jenkins, 2009; Moody, 2019), convergence culture (Deuze, 2007; Jenkins & Deuze, 2008), 'produsage' (Bruns, 2006), algorithmic culture (Murray, 2019; Beer, 2009), book history (Murray, 2019), annotation behavior (Winget, 2013), information values (Worrall, 2015, 2016, 2019), information worlds and boundary spanning (Worrall, 2016, 2019), along with social worlds (Strauss, 1978; Worrall, 2015, 2019).

6.1 Discussion

The theoretical framework allowed for the deductive generation of various codes in the thematic analysis of the five conducted interviews. However, prior to this, a survey was distributed and quantitatively analysed to understand the general trends of a larger sample of online social reading platform users. The 229 survey results demonstrated that, first of all, women are more inclined to join online social reading platforms. However, this might have been a result of a pitfall in the survey, as 87.8% of the respondents were female. Second, the survey demonstrates that people are more likely to join physical book clubs or social reading groups when they do not use online social reading platforms, according to the moderation analysis. To compare this to the interviews, the participants that were most digitally engaged with online social reading platforms were the ones with less traditional social reading experiences. Therefore, a partial answer to this research's sub question is that online social reading or being more digital in one's readership creates less inclination for people to join traditional social reading groups. However, interviewee E did mention that being so digitally centered in the past year pushed her into appreciating and seeking more traditional or physical social reading experiences. Interviewee A, albeit being a member and moderator of an online book club, did vouch for physical book clubs by saying that "a physical book club is a lot smaller and allows you to have a bit more of a, like, personal connection with everyone" (20:30). Therefore, a physical book club fills the gap of personalization and meaningful personal connection, whilst digital book clubs are convenient and allow people to maintain their own reading pace.

Based on the rejection of the first two hypotheses, the survey results suggest that the use of online social reading platforms leads to a lack of participation. Participation, in this case, is indicated by the writing online reviews and being an online book club member variables. Both hypotheses were rejected, and an alternative hypothesis was accepted in their place that suggested that the use of online social reading platforms has a negative effect on the variables. In relation to the interviews, the opposite seems to be the case. The participants seemed to be more active in social reading when they used online social reading platforms. The availability of information and social worlds that have cultures of convergence seems to increase the motivation to become more participatory. This is clear through the thematic analysis that was conducted. The first three major themes generated out of the thematic analysis explain the nature of the platforms and the participatory culture they elicit. 'Information worlds' explains how users turn online social reading platforms into formats or means through which they can engage with one another and share insightful knowledge based on their common interests. 'Social worlds' explains how the platforms are reliant on users for their success and growth, as well as the connection users might create for the platforms through different social media platforms. This theme suggests that the critical approach users have towards platforms might impact change for the better, specifically regarding platform features but this could also extend to the corporatization that seems to be happening to the platforms. 'Convergence culture' explains how the platforms offer the spaces for users to actively behave as and become producers of content which could subsequently be consumed by other users. Overall, these three core themes can be considered sub-themes of participatory culture. Therefore, to answer the main research question, online social reading platforms are sites that offer users the spaces and features to interact and engage with one another, exchange information, become 'produsers' and build meaningful contributory relationships. Goodreads, Wattpad and, to a lesser extent Amazon Books and LibraryThing, are platforms that encourage cultures of participation, in which users artistically express themselves, share their content with others, critique and advise one another, as well as build social relationships with one another, all things encapsulated by Jenkins' (2009) participatory culture.

The question on user behavior can be answered specifically through the interviews, as what became clear was that, first, Amazon was mainly perceived as a consumer-site in which users encourage one another on their purchasing decisions. LibraryThing was not a very familiar site but was described as a site used by many librarians to catalog works and engage students with reading. Wattpad is a platform in which users purely create and consume user-generated content. Goodreads, and the most popular out of the four, is a platform in which users engage by logging and tracking their books, joining groups, creating reading challenges and visiting author profiles.

6.2 Theoretical Implications

Academics exploring this topic in the future should be aware of the constantly changing nature of these online social reading platforms, as well as the constant adaptation that readers go through because of consistent technological developments and changes in tastes. This study positions itself within a wider academic scope by being a study on four online social reading platforms, investigating participatory culture in an industry that was previously heavily analogue, and by having the digital versus analogue dichotomy. The study investigates the everyday person, and not necessarily a small sample of similar people. Therefore, one could consider it representative of the greater online reading community.

6.3 Societal Implications

The interview participants in this study are not only dedicated readers, but they are educators, marketing specialists, students and writers. Therefore, from a societal perspective, the findings in this study could impact the approaches some of the forces behind platform operations have towards their users and consumers. This study implies that those running the platforms are doing something right in terms of engaging their users and creating spaces for participation, but that is not without fault and critique. Users, specifically readers, are critical of change and more critical of change they do not appreciate. Thus, while the participants appreciate some platform functions, there are some that could be improved as discussed in this study, specifically in the section on platform function.

6.4 Limitations

There were various limitations throughout the development of this research. First, this was a study conducted in a very short period of time. Therefore, if the study had lasted longer and seen the shift from a pandemic-ridden era to a period of more flexibility and offline events, the results might have been different. Furthermore, should there have been more time, more interviews could have been conducted to include men, for example, or people from more varying age groups. There was some bias in the selection of participants to interview, as each participant needed to have been part of an online social reading platform to adequately answer the central research question. Therefore, people who engage in and enjoy offline social reading more were missed out on. Additionally, there were not enough participants who used LibraryThing, therefore, an in-depth assessment of user behavior and opinion on the platform was not possible.

6.5 Future Research

A very striking finding in this research that future research should investigate is the social reading on social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok and Facebook. These platforms were

consistently brought up and can result in unique results that might not be found in an investigation on online social reading platforms. Social media platforms allow for greater socialization, so it would be intriguing to understand whether readers on these platforms develop stronger bonds, delve into greater discussion or engage with content creation to a greater extent.

Another topic that could be investigated in future research is the narrative of 'the death of the print book'. One could look into the perceptions that people in the publishing industries, electronic-book industry and more readers have on the topic.

6.6 International Orientation

This research was more globally, and internationally centered because of its exploration of platforms that admit the contributions and engagement of people worldwide with access to digital technology and the internet. The survey and interview respondents were dynamic in their nationalities and roots. They all shared English as a common language, which is the common denominator on most of the platforms, or at least in this research. The future research could also be explored under an international purview. It would be quite difficult to investigate online social reading platforms for one specific location, unless the researcher inserted themself into the platforms and actively created groups containing people from the same location.

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8. Appendix

Appendix A Questionnaire

How old are you?

○ Younger than 12

○ 13-19

○ 20-29

○ 30-39

○ 40-49

○ 50-59

○ 60 years or older

What is your gender?

○ Male

○ Female

○ Non-binary / third gender

○ Prefer not to say

What is your nationality?

[   ]

What is your highest degree so far?

○ None

○ High School Diploma

○ Trade/technical/vocational training

○ Bachelor's degree

○ Master's degree

○ Doctorate degree

○ Other

Of all the books you have read, how often do they belong to the following genres?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Mostly
Crime	○	○	○	○	○
Fantasy	○	○	○	○	○
Romance Novels	○	○	○	○	○
Historical Novels	○	○	○	○	○
Other Novels	○	○	○	○	○
Youth Literature	○	○	○	○	○
Science Fiction	○	○	○	○	○
Children's Books	○	○	○	○	○
Factual and Self-Help Books	○	○	○	○	○
Classics	○	○	○	○	○
Comics and Graphic Novels	○	○	○	○	○
Biographies	○	○	○	○	○
Poetry and Drama	○	○	○	○	○

How many books (of at least 100 pages) have you read in your free time during the last three months?
This does not include books that you read for studies/work.

○ Less than 3

○ 3 - 5

○ 6 - 11

○ 12 - 20 (at least one book per week)

○ More than 20

Please take a moment to recollect what you did yesterday.
Please write down for how long (in minutes) you used each of the following media that day.
(Write 0 if you did not use one medium at all yesterday)

Radio	
Television	
Daily Newspaper	
Internet/Online	
Books	
Magazines	
LPs/CDs/MP3	
Video/DVD	

This next question is about your reading motivation. Please read the following statements and select to what extent you agree with them.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
If a book or article is interesting, I don't care how hard it is to read.	○	○	○	○	○
Without reading, my life would not be the same.	○	○	○	○	○
My friends are sometimes surprised at how much I read.	○	○	○	○	○
My friends and I like to exchange books or articles we particularly enjoy.	○	○	○	○	○
It is very important to me to spend time reading.	○	○	○	○	○
In comparison to other activities, reading is important to me.	○	○	○	○	○
If I am going to need information from material I read, I finish reading well in advance of when I must know the material.	○	○	○	○	○
Work performance or university grades are an indicator of the effectiveness of my reading.	○	○	○	○	○
I set a good model for others through reading.	○	○	○	○	○
I read rapidly.	○	○	○	○	○
Reading helps make my life meaningful.	○	○	○	○	○
It is important to me to get compliments for the knowledge I gather from reading.	○	○	○	○	○
I like others to question me on what I read so that I can show my knowledge.	○	○	○	○	○
I don't like reading technical material.	○	○	○	○	○
It is important to me to have others remark on how much I read.	○	○	○	○	○
I like hard, challenging books or articles.	○	○	○	○	○
I don't like reading material with difficult vocabulary	○	○	○	○	○
I do all the expected reading for work or university courses.	○	○	○	○	○
I am confident I can understand difficult books or articles.	○	○	○	○	○
I am a good reader.	○	○	○	○	○
I read to improve my work or university performance.	○	○	○	○	○

Do you use your mobile phone for reading?

○ My phone does not allow reading beyond SMS

○ My phone allows reading (other than SMS) but I never read on it anyways

○ I use my phone for reading (other than SMS)

Do you use a tablet?

○ Yes

○ No

Do you use a dedicated e-reader?

○ Yes

○ No

Do you use a laptop computer?

○ Yes

○ No

Do you use a desktop computer?

○ Yes

○ No

How often do you use the following technologies for reading news?

	Never	Seldom	Often	Almost Always	Always
Print media	○	○	○	○	○
Mobile phone	○	○	○	○	○
Dedicated e-reader	○	○	○	○	○
Tablet	○	○	○	○	○
Computer	○	○	○	○	○

How often do you use the following technologies for reading articles (academic or popular)?

	Never	Seldom	Often	Almost Always	Always
Print media	○	○	○	○	○
Mobile phone	○	○	○	○	○
Dedicated e-reader	○	○	○	○	○
Tablet	○	○	○	○	○
Computer	○	○	○	○	○

How often do you use the following technologies for reading narrative non-fiction (travel reports, biographies, etc)?

	Never	Seldom	Often	Almost Always	Always
Print media	○	○	○	○	○
Mobile phone	○	○	○	○	○
Dedicated e-reader	○	○	○	○	○
Tablet	○	○	○	○	○
Computer	○	○	○	○	○

How often do you use the following technologies for reading fiction?

	Never	Seldom	Often	Almost Always	Always
Print media	○	○	○	○	○
Mobile phone	○	○	○	○	○
Dedicated e-reader	○	○	○	○	○
Tablet	○	○	○	○	○
Computer	○	○	○	○	○

Over the past 12 months, how many e-books have you read and finished on any digital device (mobile phone, tablet, desktop/laptop computer, dedicated e-reader)?

[   ]

Over the past 12 months, how many print (physical) books have you read and finished?

[   ]

Do you, or have you ever read comments or reviews from other users on opinion platforms?

○ Yes

○ No

When reading comments or reviews from other users on opinion platforms, what are your reasons for doing so?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Because contributions by other customers help me to make the right buying decisions	○	○	○	○	○
To benefit from others' experiences before I buy a good or use a service	○	○	○	○	○
Because one saves a great deal of time during shopping when informing oneself on such sites before shopping	○	○	○	○	○
Because here I get information on the quality of the products faster than elsewhere	○	○	○	○	○
To find advice and solutions for my problems	○	○	○	○	○
Because I find the right answers when I have difficulties with a product	○	○	○	○	○
Because I feel much better when I read that I am not the only one who has a certain problem	○	○	○	○	○
Because through reading one can get confirmation that one made the right buying decision	○	○	○	○	○
Because I like to compare my own evaluation with that of others	○	○	○	○	○
Because I can see if I am the only one who thinks of a product in a certain way	○	○	○	○	○
Because I enjoy participating in the experiences of other community members	○	○	○	○	○
Because I really like being part of such a community	○	○	○	○	○
Because I get to know which topics are "in"	○	○	○	○	○
Because I am interested in what is new	○	○	○	○	○

Have you ever written a review or comment on something you have read?

○ Yes

○ No

Which platforms do you actively use, or have used in the past?
(Select all that apply)

☐ Goodreads

☐ LibraryThing

☐ Amazon Books

☐ Wattpad

☐ None

What do you mainly use Goodreads for?
When I use Goodreads I use it in order to ...

	Never or did it just once	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	(Almot) Every Time
Collect books that I have read	○	○	○	○	○
Find books that I would like to read	○	○	○	○	○
Keep track of what I am currently reading	○	○	○	○	○
Get news about book releases	○	○	○	○	○
Write reviews	○	○	○	○	○
Talk about books with others	○	○	○	○	○
Chat with others about things unrelated to books	○	○	○	○	○
Communicate with authors	○	○	○	○	○
Take part in reading challenges	○	○	○	○	○
Take part in groups	○	○	○	○	○
Find quotes	○	○	○	○	○
Take part in trivia and quizzes	○	○	○	○	○
Find local events	○	○	○	○	○

Which of these functions do you consider to be most important for a website like Goodreads?
Please select the three most important ones.

☐ Collecting books that I have read

☐ Finding books that I would like to read

☐ Keeping track of books I am currently reading

☐ Getting news about book releases

☐ Writing reviews

☐ Talking about books with others

☐ Chatting with others about things unrelated to books

☐ Communicating with authors

☐ Taking part in reading challenges

☐ Taking part in groups

☐ Finding quotes

☐ Taking part in trivia and quizzes

☐ Finding local events

☐ Other (please specify)

[   ]

Please read the following statements and indicate to what extent you agree with them.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Goodreads is a community by readers for readers	○	○	○	○	○
I identify with Goodreads	○	○	○	○	○
Authors and publishers use Goodreads to promote their books	○	○	○	○	○
I trust Goodreads and their handling of my personal data.	○	○	○	○	○
Goodreads is open for everybody	○	○	○	○	○
Goodreads profits from its members	○	○	○	○	○
Goodreads is a commercial website	○	○	○	○	○

What do you mainly use LibraryThing for?
When I use LibraryThing I use it in order to ...

	Never or did it just once	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	(Almot) Every Time
Collect books that I have read	○	○	○	○	○
Find books that I would like to read	○	○	○	○	○
Keep track of what I am currently reading	○	○	○	○	○
Get news about book releases	○	○	○	○	○
Write reviews	○	○	○	○	○
Talk about books with others	○	○	○	○	○
Chat with others about things unrelated to books	○	○	○	○	○
Communicate with authors	○	○	○	○	○
Take part in reading challenges	○	○	○	○	○
Take part in groups	○	○	○	○	○
Find quotes	○	○	○	○	○
Take part in trivia, quizzes or contests	○	○	○	○	○
Find local events	○	○	○	○	○

Which of these functions do you consider to be most important for a website like LibraryThing?
Please select the three most important ones.

☐ Collecting books that I have read

☐ Finding books that I would like to read

☐ Keeping track of books I am currently reading

☐ Getting news about book releases

☐ Writing reviews

☐ Talking about books with others

☐ Chatting with others about things unrelated to books

☐ Communicating with authors

☐ Taking part in reading challenges

☐ Taking part in groups

☐ Finding quotes

☐ Taking part in trivia, quizzes or contests

☐ Finding local events

☐ Other (please specify)

[   ]

Please read the following statements and indicate to what extent you agree with them.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
LibraryThing is a community by readers for readers	○	○	○	○	○
I identify with LibraryThing	○	○	○	○	○
Authors and publishers use LibraryThing to promote their books	○	○	○	○	○
I trust LibraryThing and their handling of my personal data.	○	○	○	○	○
LibraryThing is open for everybody	○	○	○	○	○
LibraryThing profits from its members	○	○	○	○	○
LibraryThing is a commercial website	○	○	○	○	○

What do you mainly use Amazon Books for?
When I use Amazon Books I use it in order to ...

	Never or did it just once	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	(Almot) Every Time
Buy books I want to read	○	○	○	○	○
Browse for books that I would like to read	○	○	○	○	○
Add books I would like to read to my wishlist or shopping cart	○	○	○	○	○
Get news about book releases	○	○	○	○	○
Write reviews	○	○	○	○	○
Talk about books with others	○	○	○	○	○
Chat with others about things unrelated to books	○	○	○	○	○
Mark other reviews as helpful	○	○	○	○	○

Which of these functions do you consider to be most important for a website like Amazon Books? *Please select the three most important ones.*

☐ Buying books I want to read

☐ Browsing for books that I would like to read

☐ Adding books I would like to read to my wishlist or shopping cart

☐ Getting news about book releases

☐ Writing reviews

☐ Talking about books with others

☐ Chatting with others about things unrelated to books

☐ Marking other reviews as helpful

☐ Other (please specify)

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[                    ]
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Please read the following statements and indicate to what extent you agree with them.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Amazon Books is a community by readers for readers	○	○	○	○	○
I identify with Amazon Books	○	○	○	○	○
Authors and publishers use Amazon Books to promote their books	○	○	○	○	○
I trust Amazon Books and their handling of my personal data.	○	○	○	○	○
Amazon Books is open for everybody	○	○	○	○	○
Amazon Books profits from its members	○	○	○	○	○
Amazon Books is a commercial website	○	○	○	○	○

What do you mainly use Wattpad for?
When I use Wattpad I use it in order to ...

	Never or did it just once	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	(Almot) Every Time
Write my own stories	○	○	○	○	○
Find books that I would like to read	○	○	○	○	○
Keep track of what I am currently reading	○	○	○	○	○
Write reviews	○	○	○	○	○
Talk about books with others	○	○	○	○	○
Chat with others about things unrelated to books	○	○	○	○	○
Communicate with authors	○	○	○	○	○
Take part in writing contests	○	○	○	○	○
Take part in the Watty Awards	○	○	○	○	○

Which of these functions do you consider to be most important for a website like Wattpad?
Please select the three most important ones.

☐ Writing my own stories

☐ Finding books that I would like to read

☐ Keeping track of books I am currently reading

☐ Writing reviews

☐ Talking about books with others

☐ Chatting with others about things unrelated to books

☐ Communicating with authors

☐ Taking part in writing contests

☐ Taking part in the Watty Awards

☐ Other (please specify)

[   ]

Please read the following statements and indicate to what extent you agree with them.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Wattpad is a community by readers for readers	○	○	○	○	○
I identify with Wattpad	○	○	○	○	○
Authors and publishers use Wattpad to promote their books	○	○	○	○	○
I trust Wattpad and their handling of my personal data.	○	○	○	○	○
Wattpad is open for everybody	○	○	○	○	○
Wattpad profits from its members	○	○	○	○	○
Wattpad is a commercial website	○	○	○	○	○

Are you, or have you ever been a book club member?

◯ Yes

◯ No

What does your book club aim to achieve?
You can choose more than one answer.

☐ Motivates people to read

☐ Encourages people to talk about books

☐ Social dimension of reading

☐ Book marketing

☐ Other (please specify):

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└──────────────────┘
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What format is your book club?

◯ Face to face only

◯ Online only

◯ Face to face and online

How are the books selected for your book club?
You can select more than one answer.

☐ Voting

☐ Bestseller Lists

☐ Prize Winners

☐ Past reading schedules of other book clubs

☐ Most recently published books

☐ Members take turns deciding which book the club is going to read

☐ Other (please specify):

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What book formats do you read for your book club?
You can select more than one answer.

☐ Printed Books

☐ Electronic Books

☐ Audio Books

☐ Other (please specify):

[   ]

What types of books does the club read?
You can select more than one answer.

☐ Fiction

☐ Non-Fiction

☐ Classics

☐ Mystery

☐ Fantasy

☐ Other

Does your book club have a moderator?

○ Yes

○ No

Which of the following discussion methods does the club use?
You can select more than one answer.

☐ Web page posting

☐ Email alerts/newsletters

☐ Blog

☐ Live chat

☐ Other (please specify):

[   ]

How many titles does the club read for every discussion?

○ One title per discussion

○ More than one title per discussion

Do you have any comments or suggestions?

[   ]

If you are willing to take part in an interview about the topic of this survey, please leave your email address.

I might contact you and ask you for an interview in the near future.

Email:

[   ]

Appendix B Interview Guide

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in this interview. The interview covers themes of reading habits, online social reading platforms and user behavior. If at any point you feel uncomfortable in answering a question please let me know and we can skip it. This video will be recorded for academic purposes and deleted right after. The interview should last approximately 30 minutes to an hour. Do you consent to this interview being recorded?

I am very interested in hearing what you have to say, so I'll start off by asking you a few demographic questions.

1. How old are you?
2. Where are you from?
3. What do you currently do, in terms of academic or professional life?
4. What do you consider to be your main hobbies?

I reached out to you because you [completed my questionnaire and left me your contact details/ are an avid reader who uses at least one online reading platform]. This next section has to do with your general reading history and habits.

- On average, how many texts do you read or aim to read every year?
- Do you enjoy reading?
- What would you say are some of the reasons that you read? For example, for leisure or self-development purposes?
- Would you consider yourself a book lover?
    - (if yes) When do you think your love of books started?
- Can you recall the first (non-children's book) you have ever read?
- What are your favorite genres?

- Do you have a favorite book? (If yes, what is it?)

This next section is related to your use of technology.
- Out of the following devices, which one do you use most often?
  - Mobile Phone
  - Desktop Computer
  - Laptop Computer
  - Tablet
- Do you have, or have you ever had an e-reader (such as a Kindle)?
  - (If yes) Do you prefer reading on an e-reader or print books?
  - Do you read more on an e-reader or do you read more print books overall?
- Have you ever read books on a mobile phone, computer or tablet?
  - (If yes) What was your experience in using these devices for reading?
- What are your thoughts on the development of technologies, such as e-readers and tablets, regarding the publishing industry?

This next section is related to themes of social reading.
- What is the first thing you do after reading something that you deeply enjoy?
- Do you prefer reading as a private act, or are there any social dimensions involved in your reading habits?
  - Could you elaborate please?
- Do you currently, or have you ever, participated in a book club or a similar sort of reading group?
  - Is the book club/reading group in an online format or in person?
  - Do you use any platforms to communicate with your club/group?
  - (If yes) What prompted you to join this group?
  - Could you describe your group, its activities and general structure?
  - Does the group have a specific theme?
  - Does the group have a moderator?
    - What responsibilities does the moderator have?
  - Do you feel like you are missing out on any social elements that might have been present in an (online/physical) book club that are not present in yours?
    - If yes, could you please elaborate?

- If no, what do you think makes up for the digital nature/physical interaction of an (online/in person) book club?

Now I'll move on to questions regarding social reading platforms.

- Do you currently, or have you ever used Goodreads, LibraryThing, Wattpad or Amazon Books?
  - When did you start using [...]?
  - How did you discover [...]?
  - What do you do on [...]?
    - Write reviews, take part in groups, engage in discussions etc...
  - How active are you on [...]?
  - Could you name any community guidelines in place on [...]?
  - *If they use multiple platforms* Which platform do you prefer using, and why?
- How important to you is it that there is an active community on [...]?
- Would you say that you have created important social connections through this/these platform[s]?
- Is there any space for creativity or production on this/these platform[s]? In the sense of content creation, especially in collaboration with other users?
  - What kind of collaboration takes place on [...]?
- What roles do creative producers, specifically authors, have on these platforms?
  - And, if there are any, what kind of boundaries exist between users and producers on the platform[s]?
- Have you had any particularly positive, or particularly negative experiences on [...] that you would like to share?

That brings us to the end of the interview! Thank you so much for your time and incredible contribution to my research. If you are interested in the results of the research please let me know and I'd be happy to share them with you.

Do you have any additional comments, questions or anything that you think might be helpful to include?

Thank you again for your time, I hope you have a wonderful day!

Appendix C Thematic Analysis of Interviews

Example	Open Codes	Axial Codes	Selective Codes
"I guess I really like discussing things. I really like seeing if people agree with like what I think in terms of the book and like what other things they think." (Interviewee D, 16:49)	Information sharing in online social reading platforms	Information Behavior	Information Worlds
"if I know someone who's read the book, I talk to them about it, I text and call or whatever and be like ;oh whatever I just read this book.'" (Interviewee E, 13:02)	Sharing reading experiences with others		
"there's a few former students who, maybe a couple of colleagues, too, who that's the only place I sort of engage with them. And it's kind of just nice. Like it's pretty informal or not really like talking, but which isn't a bad thing, but it's a nice connection to keep	Building & maintaining digital relationships	Socialization	

going now." (Interviewee B, 27:32)			
"So Amazon, Google, Facebook, I love them all, but they're all a bit out of control, too, right? So, I mean, if Amazon, especially during a pandemic, has just I mean, especially Jeff Bezos has become so much richer. And I think if he was paying more tax and giving more back, I'd be OK with that." (Interviewee B, 25:22)	Being critical of the platforms	Critique of Online Platforms	Social Worlds
"I think more recently, Wattpad's turned into a bit more of like a corporate kind of like professional thing that I don't really value as much anymore, like I liked when it was very much by the users for the users" (Interviewee E, 27:44)	Corporatization (capitalistic-nature) of the platforms		
"it's more like a tracking thing and also like just for me to write	Appreciation of platform features	Platform Function	

my reviews, I don't even know why. I don't know if people read them, but I'm just like, wow, this is incredible. Um, so yeah, I've, I've used Goodreads quite a lot. I think that's my most used app regarding books" (Interviewee D, 18:32)			
"I think the site could do a better job of allowing for these sort of separate author profiles. So the issue that I have as I'm on there, as, of course, authors are going to be reading, too, but I would prefer to and maybe I could do this, I haven't investigated enough but to make more of a separate author profile" (Interviewee B, 29:33)	Author profiles		
"Wattpad was just about like a like casual informal way of like people sharing what they've written and their	Platform premise		

love of reading or whatever which is like reciprocated I guess between everyone." (Interviewee E, 27:44)			
"unless Goodreads changed how they added data to books, we just wouldn't have genres if there wasn't an active community." (Interviewee A, 30:38)	Reliance on users for the functioning of the platforms		
"I get all my recommendations and stuff from TikTok and Youtube, which are not book apps. But yeah, they have a lot of like book content on that." (Interviewee D, 18:32)	Connecting reading with social media platforms	Social Media	
"I feel like for Wattpad, definitely, because all you need to write a book is just to click a button. Doesn't even have to be a good book, doesn't have to be copyrighted. You can just start writing." (Interviewee C, 14:33)	Consuming user-generated content	'Produsage'	Convergence Culture

"I don't think there's a huge opportunity for it on the platform itself, but it's a great way to meet other people. And if they have a blog or if you have a blog, then you can sort of like take what you like and talk about it on Goodreads and create something offline." (Interviewee A, 31:23)	Creating content out of a reading experience		
"Goodreads has a section of the site where they have all of the infrastructure for a group, but a user has to go and create a group. They can pretty much name it whatever they want and they can choose from a bunch of tags like how to name it." (Interviewee A, 32:25)	Platform allowing for user creativity and production		
"there was much less of a divide because this is just like also just users like me who go and just like decide I want to write a story [...]	Boundaries in online social reading platform use	User Behavior	

whatever it was like, very much like you felt like, oh, this is someone I'm relating to." (Interviewee E, 27:44)			
"Goodreads doesn't have like an internal filing system. You'll notice it if you go to like a new book that doesn't have like ratings or anything yet the like the genre side could be blank until other people start logging it and it goes into like common folders [...] like a sort of communal filing system" (Interviewee A, 29:26)	Impact of user behavior on a platform		
"So we created a group on Goodreads for the two of us and we just left it public for anyone to join. And it's just become this giant thing over the years." (Interviewee A, 16:21)	Active user behavior		
"I see what they're reading, and I read the same, I don't necessarily	Passive user behavior		

participate." (Interviewee C, 8:42)			
"it's harder to sometimes reach out to people if you feel like there's nothing going on or everything's depressing. I don't know if you felt that way, but I know, like, I felt the way and a lot of my friends. And so it's something that you can still engage with and maybe help you to move forward." (Interviewee B, 33:08)	Impact of Covid-19	Covid-19	Covid-19
"groups of maybe four or five students who would have a book from the library that we had enough copies of and we'd kind of move it around, but then it extended to engagement with what they were reading outside of these literature circles." (Interviewee B, 19:16)	Physical (offline) Social Reading	Print & Offline	The Digital versus Analogue

"I think I prefer print way more because it's also like the traditional thing." (Interviewee D, 11:43)	Engaging with and preferring the traditional		
"the whole like like narrative of like printed media is dead, [...], as much as it's kind of true because like everybody is replacing these printed mediums with technology now [...] So we adapt, like we reframe like our mindset to fit into these advancements and to fit into a new idea of like what printed media is or like what publishing is." (Interviewee E, 11:08	Death of the print book		
"On my phone, it's super convenient, very easy, like super easy to just like scroll through like a book. I get through and it's small so like a page finishes quickly and you just read quickly" (Interviewee E, 8:38)	Convenience of the digital	Technological Impact	

"maybe the critics that I read who are talking about, like people who are book lovers like me, who are like, oh, man, like all this e-publishing. I think maybe they're not looking at the real story, which is that it's allowing more people to be published as well, which I think is great." (Interviewee B, 12:20)	Impact of technology on the book industry		
"But the other the other thing is this kind of like taking data. I think we kind of need to be careful about that. And I think Europe's doing a better job about data privacy than the US, for example." (Interviewee B, 25:22)	Data privacy		
"if I spend a lot of time reading these academic articles all the time for my studies, I'm less inclined or less motivated to go and read for my personal benefit or fun or	Reading & the Self	Reading Experience	Reader

whatever, just because I feel like I'm so burnt out from reading already" (Interviewee E, 02:12)			
"So while I love book clubs, I love reading with other people, it's also just sort of complicated if you never are on the same exact page as someone else throughout the process, whereas when you read privately, you're not really concerned about where other people are" (Interviewee A: 13:03)	Private reading versus social reading		