# BEYOND THE HASHTAG: EXPLORING THE MULTIFACETED WORLD OF BOOKSTAGRAM

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**Abstract:** *In the ever-evolving world of digital technologies, bookstagram is taking over the literature landscape, with the phenomenon of digital book lovers sparking a variety of research. Thus, the online space created specifically for readers around the world starts from its emergence as a hashtag and is shaped by the evolution of social media applications and, by extension, consumer demands. In such manner, keywords and themes relevant to a better understanding of the Instagram trend are established in articles from online databases that this study aims to examine. In other words, the research investigates the nature of bookstagram present in the literature through a quantitative analysis of bookstagram articles from their first appearance to the present, starting with 90 and narrowing our study to 15. Thus, the VOSviewer software is chosen as a tool, which provides a bibliometric map of all implemented papers from the Web of Science database interpreting data about the aforementioned trend. Therefore, the aim of the paper is to better understand the #bookstagram phenomenon since its first appearances in the literature, laying the foundations of relevant concepts and ideas to characterize it. So, bookstagram is relatively new in the Internet ecosystem, but it is strengthening every day the interest of digital users to discuss and learn about books, regardless of the social media platform used. There is also a growing interest in the impact the trend is having on modern literary culture. Moreover, the research will be an important pawn in the growing value of information encompassing the modern phenomenon of reading lovers on the social media platform Instagram.*

**Keywords:** *bookstagram, digital influencer, book influencer, book trends, social media influencer.*

**JEL Classification:** *M30, M31, M37, M39.*

## 1. Introduction

The 21ˢᵗ century daily is being introduced from a completely different perspective thanks to social media, which has recently changed more and more important aspects of consumers' lives online. In this way, both interaction and browsing on the Internet are continually changing, with literature being an example of an area affected by the amalgamation of web technologies. So people actively participating in the field of books on Instagram are part of the #bookstagram subculture, the community created for readers. Through this online medium, book lovers share information, suggestions and visually qualitative visual content (Tolstopyat, 2018; Wiederhold, 2022).

Thus, we can imagine an active digital space, where in addition to captivating photographs, there are also strongly supported recommendations from book-oriented community members (Darma, et al., 2020). In other words, reading enthusiasts have created the opportunity for other readers to share their experiences with people who understand their cultural pleasures, from anywhere on the globe (Jaakkola, 2019; Albrechtslund, 2020).

Hence, the bookstagram community breaks down geographical and cultural barriers, laying the foundation for a welcoming home for any individual who wants to improve their knowledge of books, discuss editorial upcoming books, or discover literary titles and genres they would not have tried before.

We can also highlight as a key feature of the phenomenon created around the hashtag #bookstagram the constant movement that is registered in the community. So, in addition to the traffic sustained by the medium being frequented several hours a day, social media platforms provide a place where the visual thrives. More importantly, the bookstagram community is built on Instagram's quality of providing content through images, but also the realm of books (Witari, 2023). In this way, what was born out of love for reading and grew organically has evolved into a globally known, complex trend that in turn creates opportunities for the individuals and people involved to grow.

On that account, #bookstagram not only aims to provide content about books, but also to create connections between participants of the hashtag in the Instagram environment. Thus, the community created is a digital space for promotion, both through active advertising and discussion between members. In other words, purchase decisions are influenced in tandem with the fluctuations of conversations and recommendations within the bookstagram online community.


## 2. Research approach

In particular, in order to better understand the concept presented above, starting from the decisive moment in the literature and up to the present, it is proposed to make a comprehensive analysis of the literature on the bookstagram phenomenon. In this way, the evolution of the trend, its characteristics, and its actual impact on the modern literary world will be observed. In particular, the present study will be based on a systematic method of collecting and analyzing articles accessible in a wide range of digital academic databases. Then, in order to identify the substrates that the phenomenon offers to literature, existing keywords in the articles under analysis will be collected and trends in the literature on bookstagram will be identified.

With regard to the literature on the modern bookstagram phenomenon, we can point out that in order to present a thorough synthesis we will focus our research on a systematic approach to specific articles. In other words, as we have observed in various works oriented towards the same methodology, this study succeeds in providing a better understanding of the defining characteristics of the phenomenon, but also in identifying the existing gaps with respect to content (Ye, et al., 2021). Next, in order to describe the #bookstagram hashtag and its digital implications in social media communities, we follow the steps that Vrontis et al. (2020) outlined in his paper, adapted to match the requirements also applied by Ye et al. (2021) and Ao et al. (2023) in their research.

Thus, data selection was performed by accessing nine electronic databases, some more massive than others, including: Emerald, EBSCO, ScienceDirect, DOAJ, Science Open, JSTOR, Lens.org and by default, Web of Science and Scopus. This was primarily aimed at identifying as many papers as possible that would help us to strengthen the already existing knowledge in the field about bookstagram and the implications of the phenomenon in the digital environment. Therefore, figure number 1 illustrates the process we followed from the identification of relevant articles for the research to the final extraction of the most significant studies that have the keyword "bookstagram".

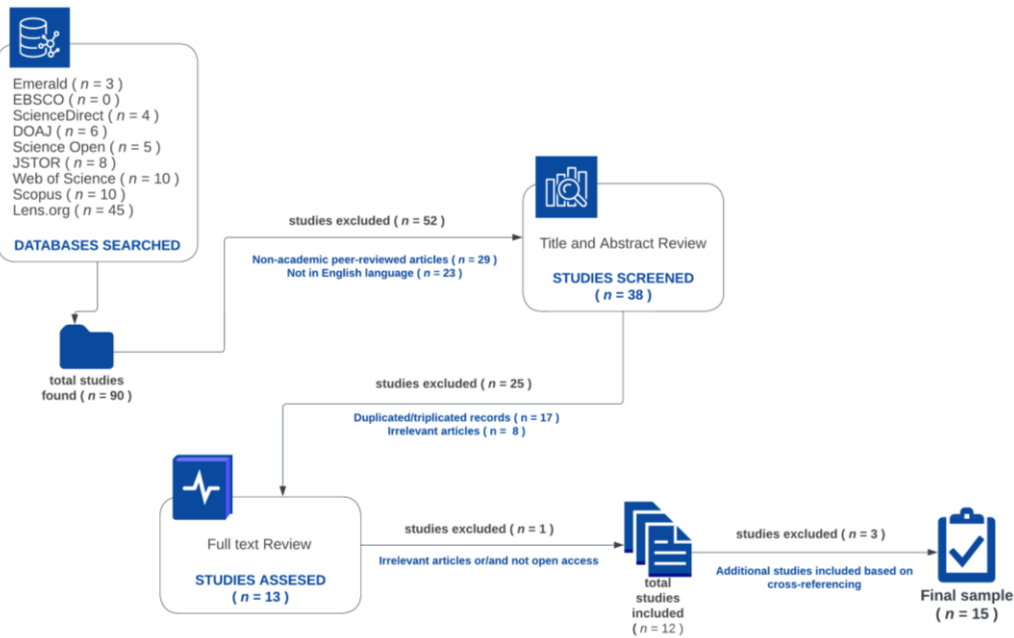Accordingly, the steps implemented in the present research consist of examining the



**Figure 14: Organizational scheme analysis articles database**
**Source: own processing**

literature through relevant digital databases, where in addition to scientific articles and book chapters, books, conference proceedings and non-academic peer-reviewed articles are found. Initially, all information was highlighted, reaching a potential of 90 papers with and about bookstagram published at the time of February 2024, i.e. 27 February 2024. Since we want to ensure the quality of the data analyzed, we limited the search to English-language scholarly articles only, thus excluding more than half of the papers that do not meet the publication type criterion, with a total of 38 studies viewed.

Next, duplicate or triplicate articles, i.e. articles irrelevant for a better understanding of the above mentioned hashtag were removed from the analysis and we reached a total of 13 documents. As reading the title and abstract did not provide clarity for all identified studies, we conducted a full analysis of the published text, thus eliminating one article whose content did not contain significant information for inclusion in the research. Subsequently, by analyzing the bibliographic references of these scientific papers, we added 3 such materials that did not appear in previous searches of the nine databases. In total, we arrived at 15 articles that reinforce the characteristics of the bookstagram phenomenon.

Moreover, the scientific articles identified as relevant to our study introduce a number of keywords into the literature that are closely related to the field we study. Therefore, the 15 scientific articles mentioned above have been analyzed from the keyword perspective, and we highlight the keywords identified by figure number 2, where it can be seen that most of

them are in the lexical field of our main keyword. Moreover, they create the major themes that sprinkle the literature on the trend present in Instagram.



**Figure 15: Word Cloud generated with keywords from the final sample of the articles**
**Source: own processing**

In order to provide clarity to the subdomains born from the bookstagram analysis, we created a comprehensive list of all 76 words, thus marking the importance of the keywords: "reading" (8 occurrences), "bookstagram", "social media" and "Instagram" with 6 occurrences each, but also "book" and "social" with 5, respectively, 4 occurrences.  For the word "marketing" there are three such occurrences in the selected articles. Thus, the universe of literature in which bookstagram is present can largely provide important data and insights for further current research, but the limited number of scholarly papers is noted. In this way, all these words help us to lay the groundwork for future detailed research, and they become the starting point in the broad analysis of keywords associated with bookstagram.

In order to carry out this thorough bibliometric analysis, we used the VOSviewer program as the main pawn in the keyword presentation. In this way, the landscape created by the data amalgamation provides new information, identifying potential gaps in the literature and, moreover, contributing significantly to enriching both current and future research in the field. As the bookstagram phenomenon is still relatively new, with its characteristics making their mark on the Instagram community only in the last few years, the research will focus on the keyword "bookstagram". For the next section examined, we chose the Web of Science online database, since it represents one of the most highly recommended and relevant for deepening qualitative content in the currently existing literature. Thus, in March 2024, i.e. 5 March 2024, a series of revealing information on the birth, evolution and implication of the bookstagram phenomenon and the defining elements of this trend in modern marketing, the one actively involved in social media, have been identified.

## 2.1. Web of Science database

An important perspective to understand is the growing trend itself, bookstagram. It is a phenomenon of particular significance among digital reading enthusiasts since it guides a safe and welcoming space for readers to discuss and share books. As it is shaped by the intersection of literature and online, bookstagram marks its presence in social media through its significant influence on reading habits, the marketing developed around the core product, the book, and the community itself born around the hashtag.

As noted in Figure 3, the emergence of the phenomenon among research proposals is relatively new, with the first wave occurring in 2020 with 3 publications. Implicitly, we can state that the pandemic period marked the need for such a study oriented towards digital readings since the global impulse was to translate traditional activities online (Hrib, 2020). Notably, bookstagram appears in the literature and since then continues to grow and make its mark on the variation of works.
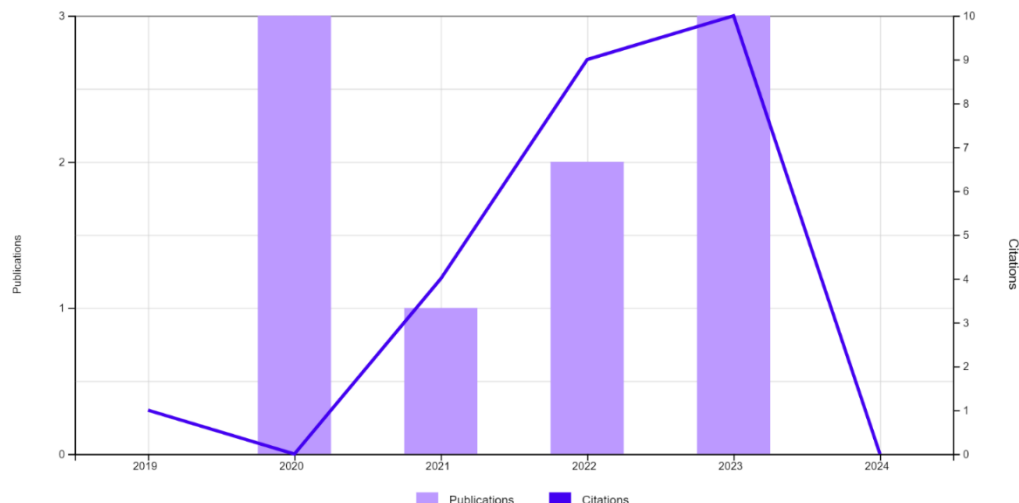


**Figure 16: Publication years and Citations for keyword "bookstagram"**
**Source: retrieved from Web of Science**

So far in 2024 there is no work registered for "bookstagram".

In previous years, although the actual number of articles does not exceed the peak of the initial year, the number of citations increases considerably, with 10 academic mentions in 2023. At the same time, the year 2023 is also marked by the expansion of the literature, with the number of articles on bookstagram steadily increasing between 2019 and 2023.



**Figure 17: Countries where "bookstagram" articles were published**
**Source: own processing with data retrieved from Web of Science**

Also, in Figure 4 we can see the diversity of countries where this trend has been researched, with scholarly study existing over a considerable area of the globe, but in limited numbers.

In other words, although the phenomenon is a novel topic that is increasingly studied in depth, the variety of work remains low.

## 2.2. VOSviewer's way of bookstagramming

In order to be able to outline the current landscape of the study of the aforementioned phenomenon, we will focus on the bibliometric analysis of the aforementioned keyword, i.e., we will use VOSviewer as the main tool in visualizing and exploring the academic works surrounding the term "bookstagram".

Notably, the VOSviewer map resulting from the collection of data identified in existing articles in the Web of Science database reveals several distinct groupings in Figure 5. These are intended to mark the dynamics and evolution of the information resulting from various studies in the field of bookstagram (Rosário & Dias, 2023). Also present is the highlighting of the keyword network that appears in close relation in each scientific article entered and, moreover, the remark in a particular way of the frequency recorded for each such keyword.

Next, we note the differences in the color palette of the bibliometric map and thus highlight the clusters created that are intended to provide future research trends. In other words, cluster 1, highlighted in light blue, includes keywords such as *bookstagram*, *digital reading*, *social media* and *influencer*, all of which suggest a particular focus on the theme of digitally promoted reading.

Similarly, cluster 2, shown in yellow, focuses on digital social media and the diversity it offers in terms of product marketing, as evidenced by the relationship of the keywords *social media*, *Instagram*, *BookTok* and *marketing*. Notably, the presence of a smaller cluster size than those mentioned above indicates a growing interest in better understanding the culture of reading in the everyday 21ˢᵗ century, as shaped by keywords such as *social reading*, *participatory culture* or *digital book culture*.
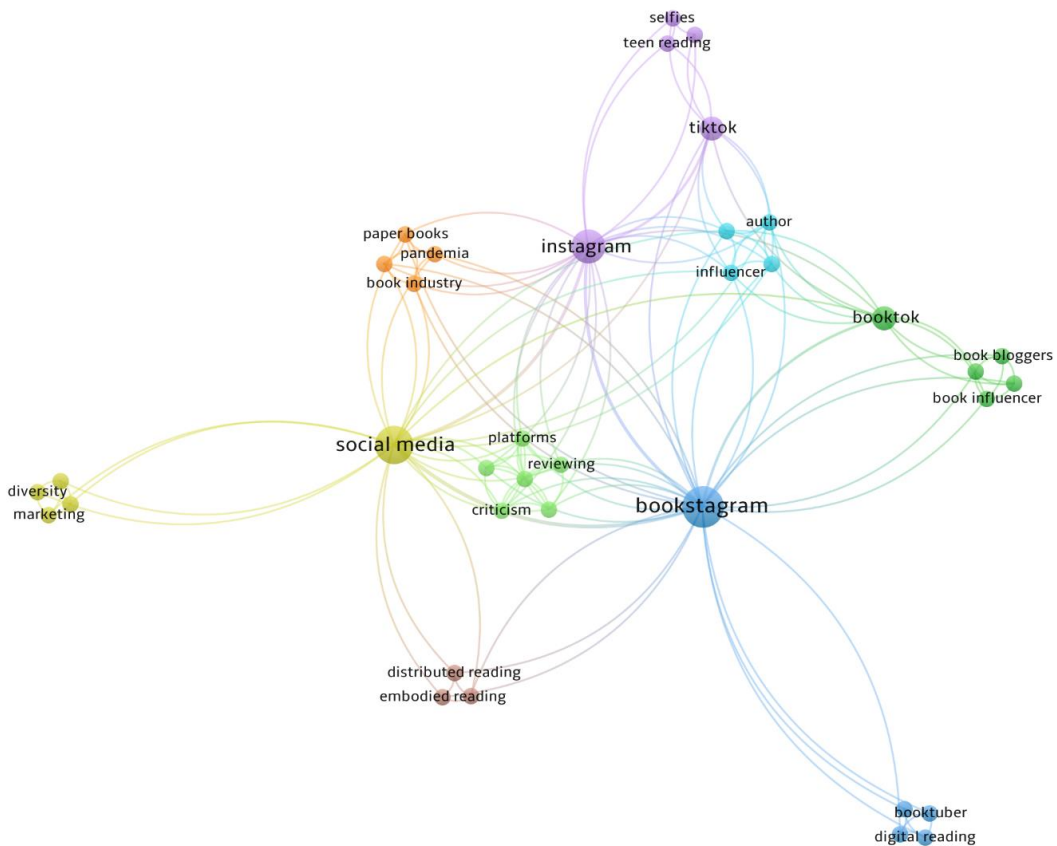
**Figure 18: Network of Keywords for "bookstagram"**
**Source: VOSviewer program**

In such way, we note that the data resulting from the present research supports the existing literature, highlighting the close link between digital platforms and the promotion of habits and different cultures, in this case books.

Moreover, attention is increased on the bookstagram phenomenon (6 mentions, meaning a total of 35 links created), present on Instagram (5 mentions, with a total of 30 links created) which is a social media app (4 mentions and 26 links created). Therefore, these three keywords stand out as the most important ones in the present analysis since their bubble has a much higher volume than the rest of the bubbles present in the map.

## 3. Results and Conclusion

As bookstagram is more than just an area to view books, it encourages interactions both between participating individuals and with the book itself, as well as exploring conversations, recommendations and content inspired by the personal reading experiences of online community members. Thus, the bookstagram influence marks an important point in researching Instagram user behavior with respect to book product consumption.

The study also investigates how keywords identified throughout the analysis of existing articles in the literature project individualized themes of the characteristics of the aforementioned phenomenon. Notably, bookstagram is a prime space for connection, engagement and influence in terms of both consumer behavior and economics (Thomas,

2021). In this vein, the present study succeeds in highlighting the multifaceted nature of the relatively new trend in the online landscape of social media platforms.

Hence, through the methodology presented in this paper we capture an in-depth understanding of the impact of the bookstagram community on the literary world in terms of shaping the reading habits of Instagram members. In other words, the phenomenon gives a particular importance to online platforms in terms of their use in the approach of interacting with book lovers and, moreover, connecting with respect to sharing information, opinions and reviews (Martens, Balling & Higgason, 2022). Therefore, with each passing moment, the interest in digital, social media variety and 21ˢᵗ century literary culture is growing alongside the development of technologies and the desire of reading enthusiasts to delve deeper into the subculture created by bookstagram (Albrechtslund, 2020).

In terms of future prospects, we can affirm that bookstagram will continue to be a central pawn in shaping the contemporary landscape of the book domain, as well as providing an online starting point for new ways to interact, consume and enjoy books (Darma, et al., 2020). In essence, by recognizing and embracing the potential that the bookstagram phenomenon implements in the literary every day, we can leverage its involvement in enhancing the literary experiences of readers present on online social media platforms.

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