



BNC RESEARCH

#AmReading: Canadian Book Buyers on Instagram



BOOKNET
CANADA

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#AmReading: Canadian Book Buyers on Instagram

About BookNet Canada's #AmReading Series

This series takes an in-depth look at how Canadian book buyers interact with social media platforms. Each #AmReading report includes two sections:

- Using Instagram to Market Books: background information on the platform, including what it is, how publishers and retailers are engaging with it, and tips and tricks
- Book Buyers on Instagram: a detailed analysis of which book buyers are using this platform, the subjects they are purchasing, and how they are making their purchases

Consumer data for these reports have been obtained through BookNet Canada's Consumer Research in which adult book-buying Canadians participate in online surveys about their book purchases from the prior month. Book buyers report on such information as what they purchased, where they made the purchase, what influenced their purchase, and other quantitative data. The data panel comprises the following number of respondents:

- 2015 – 1,858 book buyers
- 2016 – 1,827 book buyers
- 2017 – 2,169 book buyers

Part I – Using Instagram to Market Books

What is Instagram?

Instagram is a photo- and video-sharing social networking platform that was launched in 2010 for iOS. In 2012, a version for Android was released, followed by a very limited web interface. Over one million users registered for the service within the first two months, 10 million within the first year, and currently, the platform has over 1 billion users who are active monthly. Half of these users are active daily¹. The United States has the most monthly active users at 120 million², while Canada has 10.4 million³.

Over the years, not much has changed; it has been a photo-sharing service since its launch, with video sharing added in 2013 to compete with the then-popular Vine. Apart from that, the app's function has remained the same while various features have been upgraded or added. These updates include new filters, searching via hashtags, messaging, location tags, improved editing capabilities, varied aspect ratio capabilities, multiple-photo posting, monetization, links, Instagram "stories," livestreaming, and various shopping features using Instagram stories and product tags.

¹ "Our Story". Instagram, 2018, <https://instagram-press.com/our-story>. 19 July 2018.

² "Number Of U.S. Instagram Users From 2015 To 2021". Statista, 2018, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/578364/countries-with-most-instagram-users>. 19 July 2018.

³ "Digital Advertising in 2018". Communicatto, February 2018, <https://www.communicatto.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Digital-Advertising-Webinar-2018-02-22-Printable.pdf>. 19 July 2018.

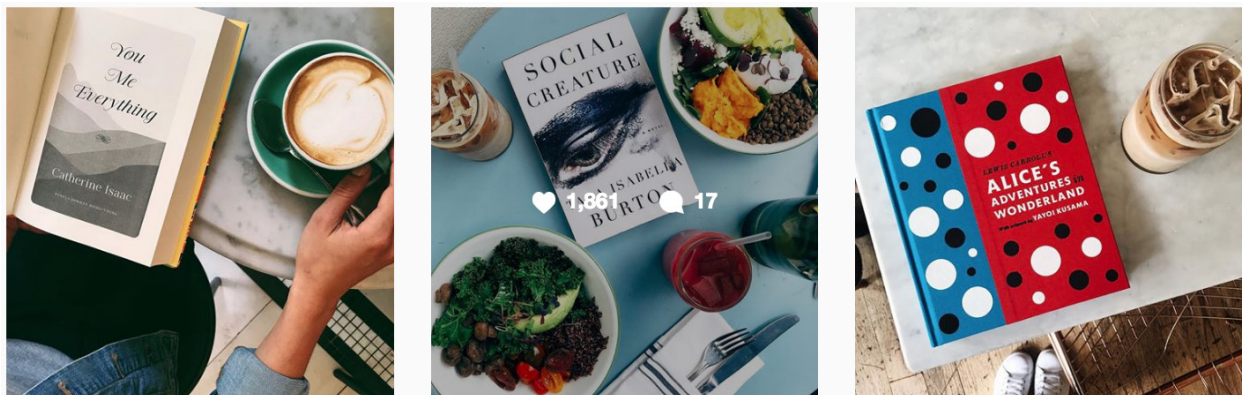
In 2016, in order to “improve customer experience,” Instagram also switched from a chronological newsfeed to an algorithm-based feed. This change was very controversial, especially with businesses and bloggers who claim that the new algorithm made their posts less visible to potential customers and that they receive less traffic as a result⁴. Despite Instagram’s reliance on businesses using the tool for marketing, its algorithms automatically favour certain accounts and types of content, which vary by user according to their behaviour on the app. While publishers and retailers have little control over most of the factors that influence what users are shown, they can get ahead of the algorithm by posting frequent, engaging content.

How are publishers and retailers using Instagram?

Publishers and book retailers are among those trying to remain not only visible, but also relevant in a pool of more than one billion monthly active users. Popular tactics include: highlighting new and backlist titles; promoting their authors; and posting about events.

Promoting new titles

Most commonly, Instagram is used to promote upcoming and new releases through aesthetically pleasing photos, contests, and giveaways, and by promoting an appealing lifestyle of reading. This usually involves brightly coloured photos with one or more books prominently featured in a picturesque setting. Popular props include cups of coffee, food, cozy items like blankets and pillows, and similar titles. These photos typically exclude people’s faces so that Instagram users can more readily picture themselves as the reader. If a face is included in the photo, that person is usually either the author, a celebrity, a well-known social media influencer, or a book blogger/bookstagrammer.



@penguinrandomhouse

⁴ Belanger, Lydia. “Instagram has answered your questions about how its algorithm works”. Entrepreneur, June 2018, <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/314473>. 19 July 2018.

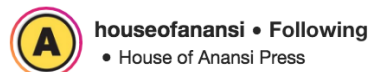
Bookstagrammers promote new books to their followers in order to expand their own audiences and are incredibly influential in doing so, which makes them the perfect target audience for your posts. It may be worthwhile to send these influencers free copies of the titles you are trying to promote so they can review and hopefully endorse them.

Hashtags are useful for reaching bookstagrammers, who are always looking for new titles to review. They also make your photos more searchable on Instagram and help people learn about new titles even if they aren't necessarily looking for books. For example, if you use the hashtag of a title that has recently been adapted into a movie, then anyone looking for photos from the movie are also likely to stumble across your book posts.

Promoting backlist titles

Instagram is an excellent platform for promoting backlist titles. Pairing a new or upcoming release with an older one in a post can help boost sales and recognition of both books. It's free marketing for books that may not have a marketing budget anymore.

Publishers and book retailers often post photos of books that tie into various holidays and current events. It doesn't necessarily have to be a holiday like Christmas or Mother's Day; it can be something like sharing a baking book on National Cookie Day, a book about dogs on National Puppy Day, or a wedding planner for an event like the Royal Wedding. Below is an excellent example from Chronicle Books.



houseofanansi The 2018 Griffin Poetry Prize shortlist readings are just around the corner and we have a beautiful new anthology to celebrate the occasion 🎉 @griffinpoetry

houseofanansi #houseofanansi #Anansi #books #poetry #poetryofinstagram #griffinpoetry #griffinpoetryprize #griffinpoetryprize2018 #poet #poets #bibliophile #bookstagram #nowreading #currentlyreading #igreads #instareads #bookart #bookdesign #art #design #coverart #coverdesign

@houseofanansi



chroniclebooks Happy National Puppy Day! We're celebrating today by going out of our way to pet any dog in sight (after asking permission, of course). 🐾🐶🐾: #MeetYourDog by Kim Brophey, a groundbreaking training book for dog lovers to fully understand their dogs and form truly authentic relationships with them 🐾

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ianslibrary @rasputinguts

dmitterhofer @cfrench33

tiedyerae @relished712

patchyalater Whose that lady?? Shady lady

suzlewisnz Do you know what type of puppy this is? I would love one ☐



874 likes

MARCH 23

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@chroniclebooks

Promoting authors and imprints

Many publishers and retailers use Instagram to promote authors. Tagging their personal accounts in photos of their books or at events can help your followers seek them out, which they might not otherwise have thought to do. After all, authors are often the best at marketing their own books and events.

Similarly, if a celebrity or social media influencer recommends the book you are trying to promote, it's a good idea to repost their photo. This fulfills the same function as including a celebrity endorsement on the cover of a book.



You can also tag specific imprints if you have more than one Instagram account to direct your followers to content that may better suit their interests.

Events

True to the instant nature of Instagram, you would be remiss not to promote events such as author signings, launches, and “book holidays” like Canadian Indie Bookstore Day on the platform, which simultaneously promotes authors, your newest releases, and bookstores. Creating an event-specific hashtag allows attendees to contribute to event promotion and helps your followers find photos and videos during or after the event. Instagram stories allow you to post temporary content, such as event reminders and announcements, and to bundle a series of posts in chronological order during the event itself. Instagram’s livestreaming feature can also be used to broadcast these events to your followers.

Tips for developing an Instagram strategy

What do you hope to achieve?

First and foremost, you have to decide what you want to accomplish with your Instagram account. Do you want to increase brand recognition? Sell more books? Do you want more partnerships with book bloggers? Are you hoping to promote conversation and feedback? Once you answer this question, you can more accurately pinpoint the direction and style of your account.

There are thousands of book bloggers and book clubs using Instagram to share recommendations and connect with readers, ranging from small niche groups like the Amnesty International Book Club with only 400 followers to celebrity book clubs like Reese Witherspoon's Hello Sunshine. For young celebrities like Emma Roberts, Instagram is the primary platform for hosting their book clubs. As you develop your strategy, you should decide how much of your marketing resources you want to put into developing your presence on the platform.

As far as social media goes, Instagram can offer a fairly good return on investment. For example, the success of Instapoets like Rupi Kaur has inspired an entire genre of accessible and fairly lucrative poetry.

Develop a consistent style

Once you know what you want to accomplish with your Instagram account, you should set up a style guide. All of your pictures should pair well with one another and maintain a consistent voice. The most common mistake people make is using a variety of different filters. Though they are provided, it's best to simply post photos that are well-lit, colourful, and clear with minimal, if any, effects and filters. Photos with high contrast and few shadows are best, since it's important that your followers can clearly read and identify the books and products being presented. A high-contrast book cover with bold, blocky letters juxtaposed with a colourful or patterned background, as is the current trend in cover design, is the most "Instagrammable" and easily readable in a digital thumbnail.



@ecwpress

Gather the right audience

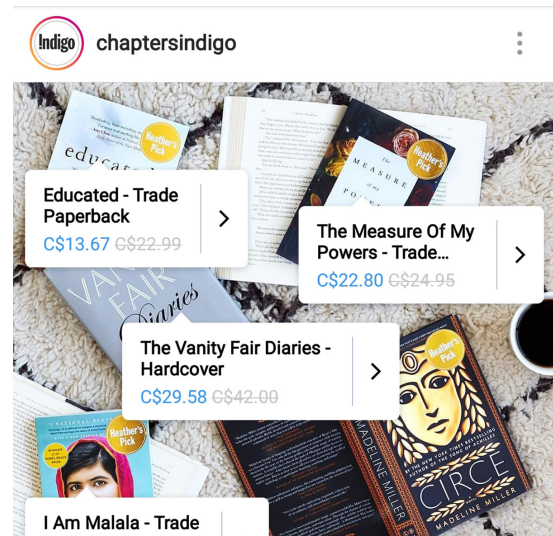
The most straightforward way to gain followers is by following similar accounts and by liking and commenting on related content. Book blogs are a great place to start. You can use and follow the #bookstagram hashtag to help you build the right audience. Look out for spam bots and try to reply to comments in a professional and consistent way. Interaction with potential customers is key.

Giveaways and contests are an excellent way to promote not only your new releases, but also your account. Have people follow your account, repost their contest entries, or tag friends in the comments to expand your reach.

Use Instagram's built-in features

Your profile shouldn't look like a collection of advertisements for your titles or store. Instead it should present a lifestyle to your followers; one that requires the products and services you happen to offer. With that in mind, Instagram offers several features that will help you sell books.

First and foremost, location tags will help followers locate where to buy your books or where to attend your events. Since stories are best for sharing content immediately and temporarily, they can be used to advertise more time-sensitive events and/or sales. Finally, Instagram can be used as a digital storefront, allowing you to tag products with links to your online store, as long as your products are already available on Facebook.



@chaptersindigo

Metrics and analytics

So you've posted a few photos and gotten a few likes. What next? There are several different methods for keeping track of your account and measuring its success. If you want to keep things simple, keeping track of your followers and the number of likes your posts receive is the best place to start.

Likes-to-follower ratio

The likes-to-follower ratio (LFR) determines what percentage of your followers are engaging with your content on a regular basis. The higher this number is, the better. If your average LFR is higher than 5%, then you are doing very well. Statistically, the more followers you have, the lower your LFR is likely to be. This is largely due to bot accounts and because users typically miss 70% of the content they subscribe to⁵. Instagram's algorithm attempts to combat this by prioritizing certain content and accounts that have proven to be popular with each user.

⁵ Constine, Josh. "How Instagram's algorithm works". Tech Crunch, June 2018, <https://techcrunch.com/2018/06/01/how-instagram-feed-works/>. 25 July 2018.

Popular posts

Keep track of the posts that do well and try to identify trends. Did your best photos include certain hashtags? Did they correspond to specific holidays? Did they mention a particular author? At the same time, you should keep track of the posts that do poorly and try to determine why based on the same metrics.

Posting content at peak times is also important: lunch from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and evenings from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. are the most popular. However, you should factor in where the majority of your followers are located and differences in time zones⁶.

Content scheduling

Programs such as Hootsuite (which can cost between \$20-\$100 per month depending on your needs) can track these kinds of metrics for you and help you to determine your best times for posting content. Most programs allow you to manage multiple social media accounts on a single dashboard and schedule content in advance.

Other popular tools include

Keyhole, Sprout Social, and Instagram Insights (which is free in the app if you set up an Instagram business account — which is also required if you want to sell products through your posts). A little research will help you determine which program will best suit your needs and budget.



Screenshot from Simply Measured

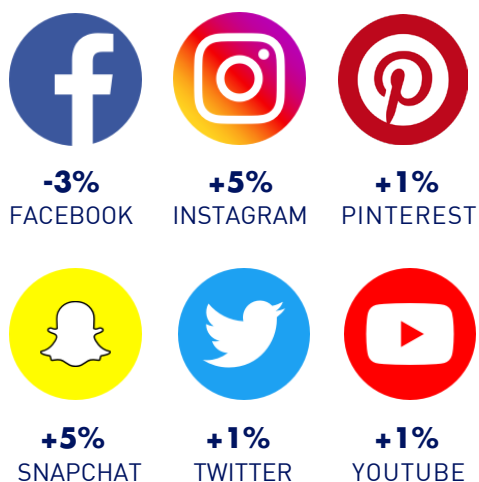
⁶ Loren, Taylor. "The best time to post on Instagram in 2018". Later, January 2018, <https://later.com/blog/best-time-to-post-on-instagram/>. 25 July 2018.

Part II – Book Buyers on Instagram

It is estimated that about 37% of Canadians were Instagram users in 2017⁷. According to *The State of Social Media in Canada 2017* by the Social Media Lab at Ryerson University, 61% of Canadian Instagram users are on the platform daily with an additional 21% using it weekly. It cites Instagram as the sixth-most popular social media platform in Canada for 2017.

Changes in social media use

by Canadian book buyers in 2017 show that Instagram and Snapchat had the highest growth from 2016



Source: BookNet Canada's consumer survey
booknetcanada.ca/amreading-research-series

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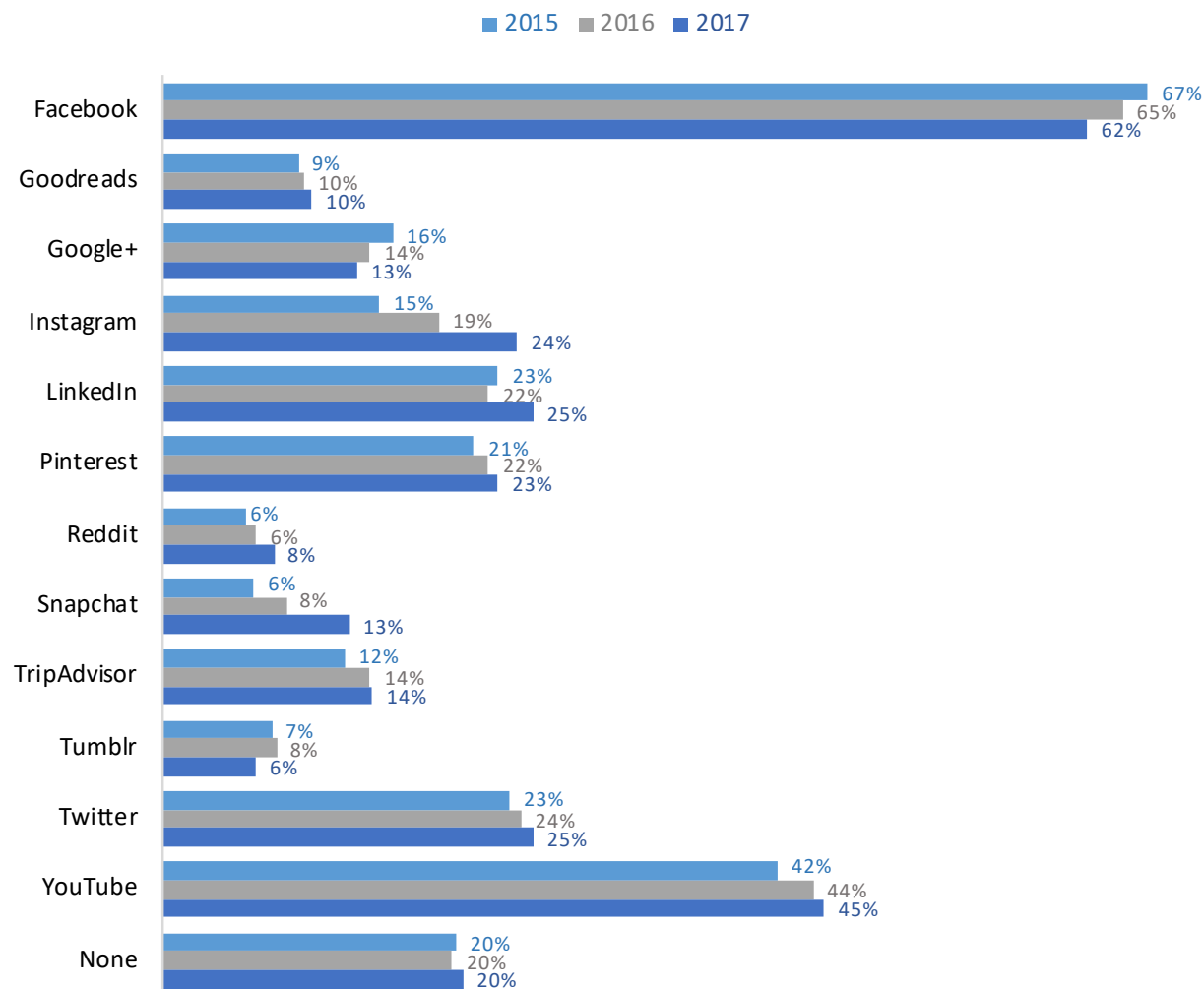
But how does Instagram use break down specifically for book buyers? To examine this question, BookNet Canada turned to our consumer data. We survey adult book buyers (age 18+) from across Canada every quarter to ask them about their book purchases, preferences, and activities, including their use of social media platforms.

For this section of the study, we will take an in-depth look at the Canadian book buyers who use Instagram and offer insights into what they like to purchase and where they shop.

⁷ Social Media Lab. The State of Social Media in Canada 2017. February 2018. <http://socialmedialab.ca/2018/state-of-social-media-in-canada>. 26 July 2018.

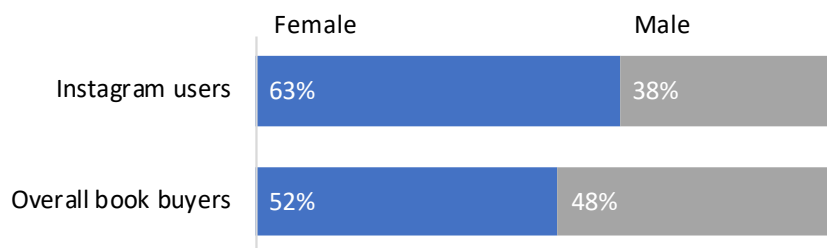
In the graph below we compare year-over-year shifts of social media use by book-buying Canadians between 2015 and 2017. We found that in 2017 24% of book-buying Canadians were Instagram users, which is up 5% from 2016.

Year-over-year social media use by book buyers



Who is the average book-buying Instagram user?

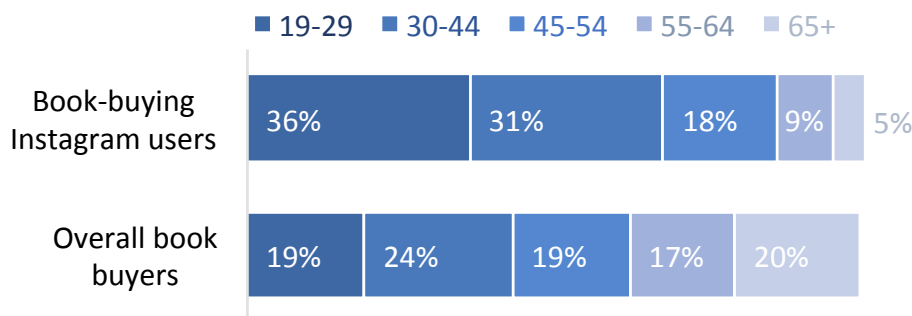
Gender identification



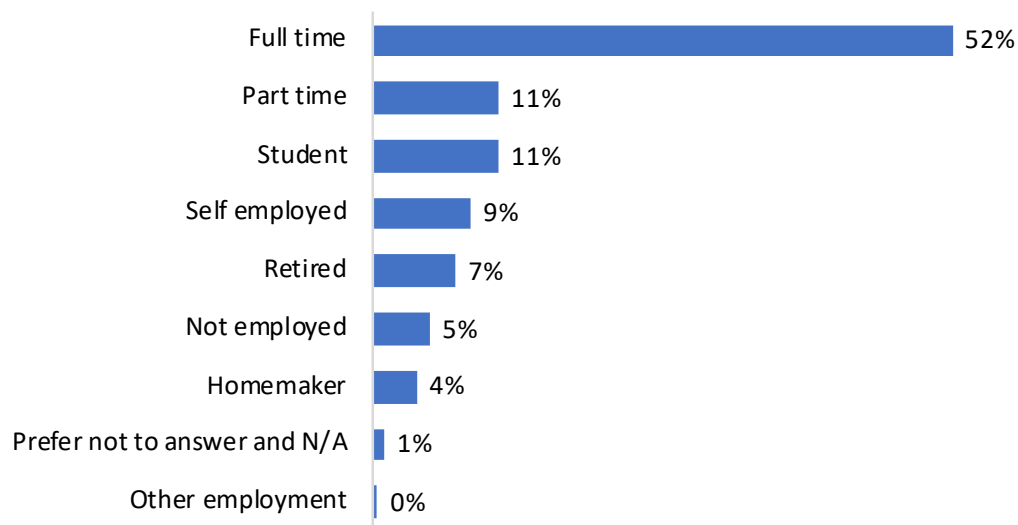
Keeping in mind that we only surveyed adult book buyers (18 and up), the average age for book-buying Instagram users was 38 years old, while most fell in the range of 19 to 29 years old.

According to the Canadian Internet Registration Authority, 59% of Canadian Instagram users (not just book buyers) are between the ages of 18 and 34, as of 2018⁸.

Age

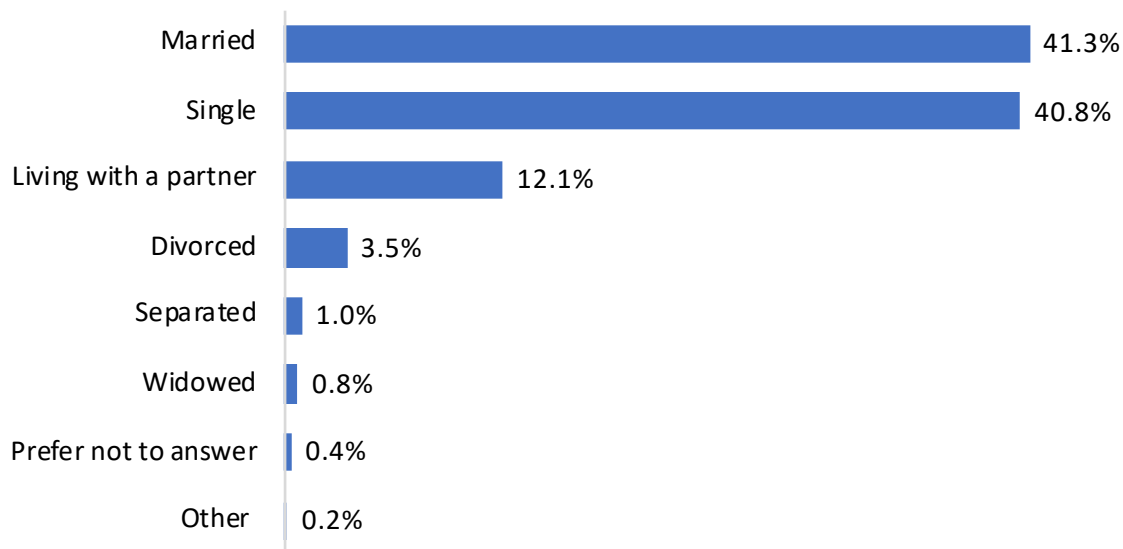


Employment status



⁸ Canadian Internet Registration Authority. Canada's Internet Factbook, 2018, <https://cira.ca/factbook/canada%E2%80%99s-internet-factbook-2018>. 26 July 2018.

Relationship status

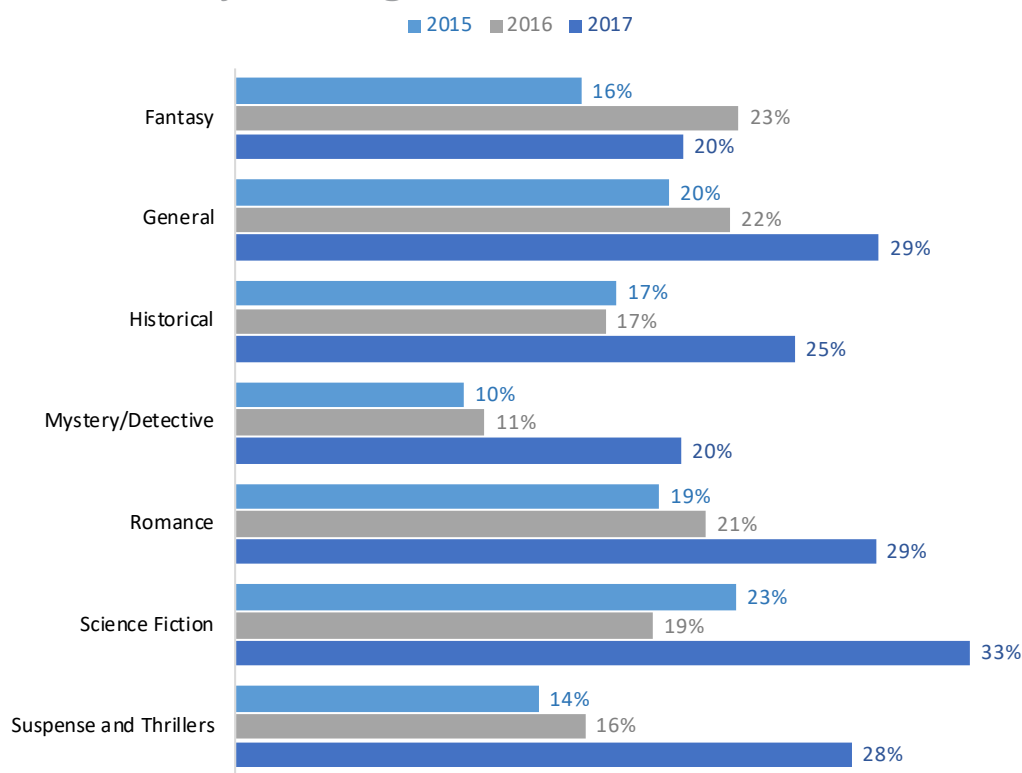


Instagram users by subject

In the graphs below we look at the percentage of book buyers who use each social media platform, broken out by the particular subjects they purchased. For example, in 2017, 20% of Fantasy buyers were Instagram users compared to 33% of Science Fiction buyers. In order to keep the data statistically valid, we have limited the number of subjects to the top-selling categories.

Since each respondent could report multiple purchases in various genres and use more than one social media platform, totals will not add up to 100%.

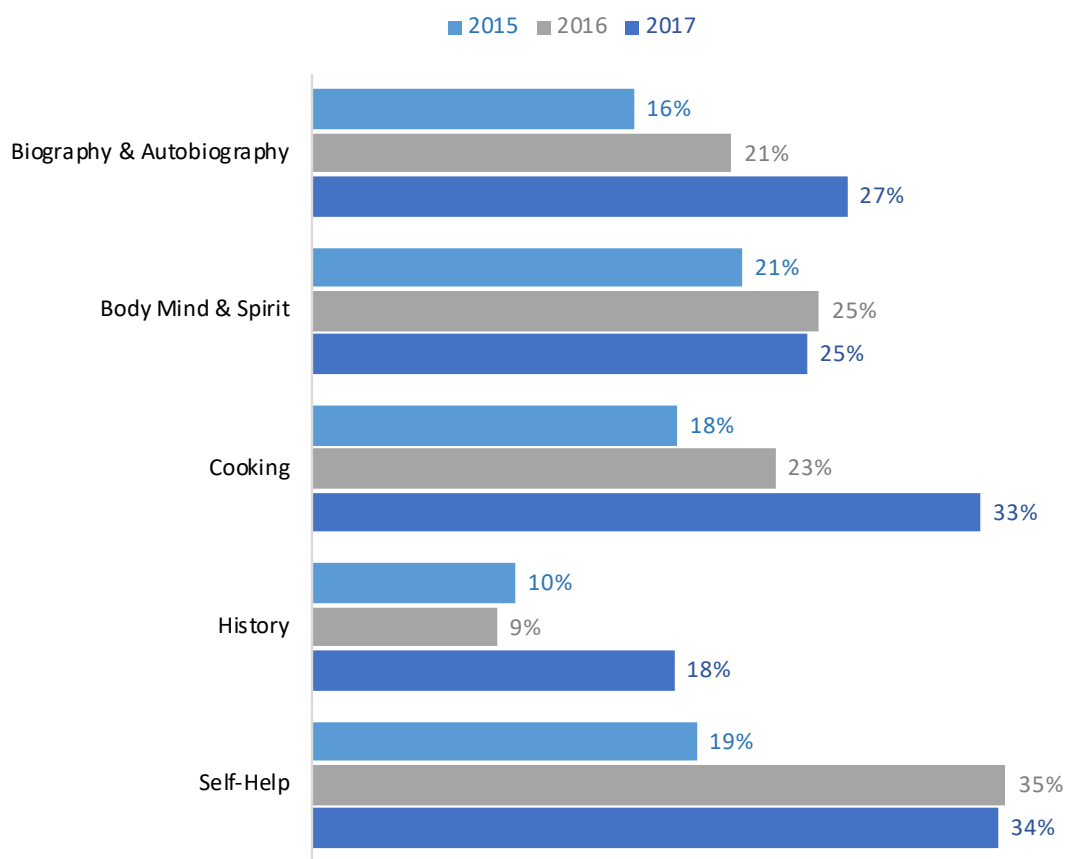
Instagram users by fiction genre



Social media users by fiction genre

	Fantasy	General	Historical	Mystery & Detective	Romance	Science Fiction	Suspense & Thrillers
Facebook	58.5%	56.3%	62.6%	59.2%	66.5%	72.2%	63.9%
Goodreads	16.3%	19.3%	20.6%	10.4%	14.7%	17.3%	15.9%
Google+	15.5%	12.2%	18.3%	10.4%	11.2%	23.3%	13.0%
Instagram	20.2%	29.0%	25.2%	20.1%	28.8%	33.1%	27.7%
LinkedIn	26.4%	28.2%	29.8%	24.4%	27.1%	22.6%	27.5%
Pinterest	21.7%	26.1%	30.5%	16.4%	32.4%	22.6%	26.9%
Reddit	14.7%	8.4%	9.9%	5.7%	4.7%	22.6%	6.1%
Snapchat	18.6%	16.4%	7.6%	9.4%	16.5%	18.8%	9.5%
TripAdvisor	12.8%	15.1%	16.0%	16.7%	19.4%	15.8%	15.9%
Tumblr	10.5%	8.8%	7.6%	4.7%	8.2%	16.5%	4.6%
Twitter	26.4%	27.7%	29.8%	23.7%	29.4%	36.1%	22.8%
YouTube	49.2%	41.2%	50.4%	41.1%	41.2%	59.4%	43.4%
None	15.9%	20.6%	16.8%	26.4%	18.2%	12.8%	21.4%

Instagram users by non-fiction genre



Social media users by non-fiction genre

	Biography & Autobiography	Body Mind & Spirit	Cooking	History	Self-Help
Facebook	60.7%	62.3%	60.5%	64.0%	73.7%
Goodreads	12.7%	11.7%	12.3%	10.8%	10.5%
Google+	12.0%	15.6%	14.8%	12.6%	22.4%
Instagram	26.7%	24.7%	33.3%	18.0%	34.2%
LinkedIn	29.3%	23.4%	29.6%	27.9%	36.8%
Pinterest	22.7%	27.3%	27.2%	18.0%	35.5%
Reddit	11.3%	9.1%	6.2%	7.2%	10.5%
Snapchat	12.7%	10.4%	12.3%	10.8%	25.0%
TripAdvisor	19.3%	13.0%	17.3%	9.0%	10.5%
Tumblr	5.3%	6.5%	4.9%	7.2%	7.9%
Twitter	30.7%	14.3%	28.4%	28.8%	40.8%
YouTube	52.7%	45.5%	40.7%	46.8%	57.9%

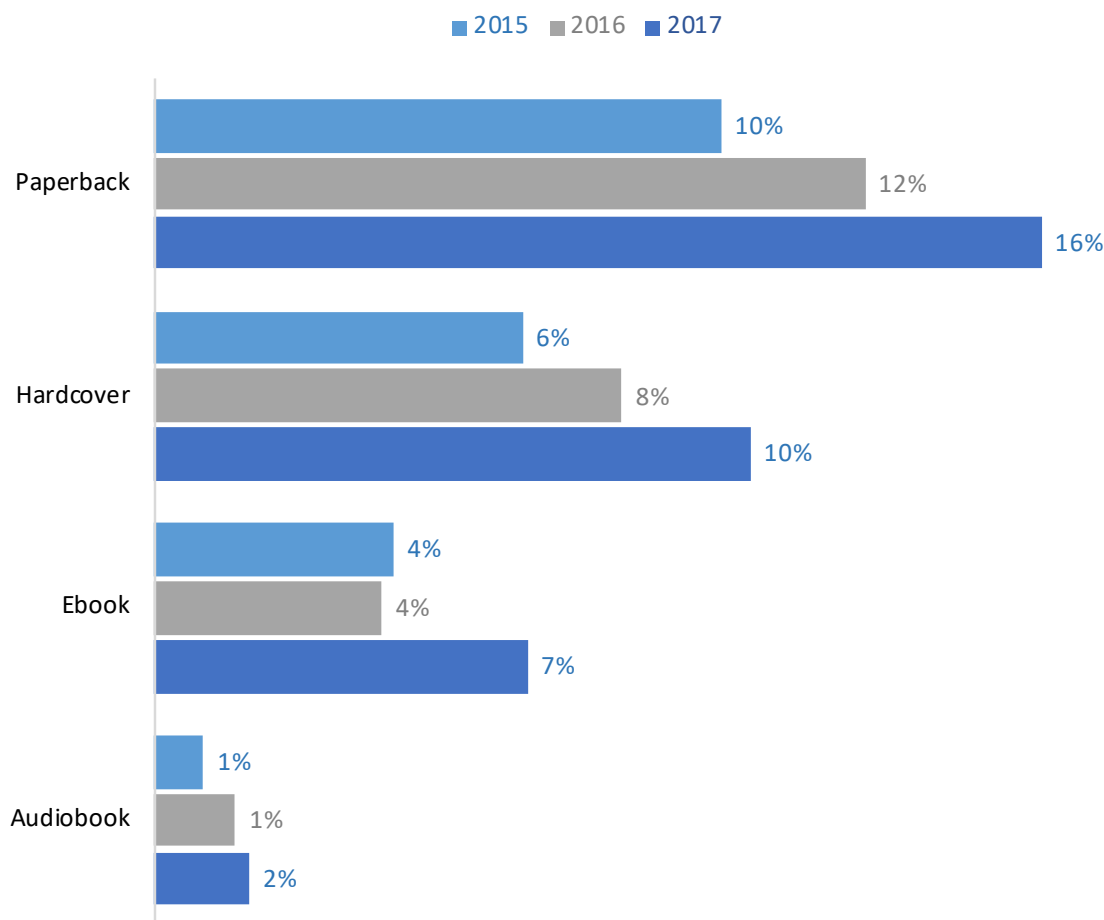
Social media users by format

When breaking out purchases by format, we find that, in 2017, 50% of overall book purchases in Canada were paperback, 25% hardcover, and 19% ebook. When we look at this data broken out by social media use, we find that there was a big jump in Instagram use between 2016 and 2017 but the jump was more notable for those who purchased audiobooks and ebooks. Of course, because we are seeing year-over-year growth in Instagram use, the number of book-buying Instagram users is also increasing.

When we look at each format individually we find that book buyers who purchase ebooks and audiobooks tend to proportionally use Instagram much more than those who buy hardcover and paperbacks; 30% of ebook buyers and 42% of audiobook buyers use Instagram.

When we look at all book buyers, of those who use Instagram, 2% buy audiobooks and 16% buy paperbacks.

Instagram users by format



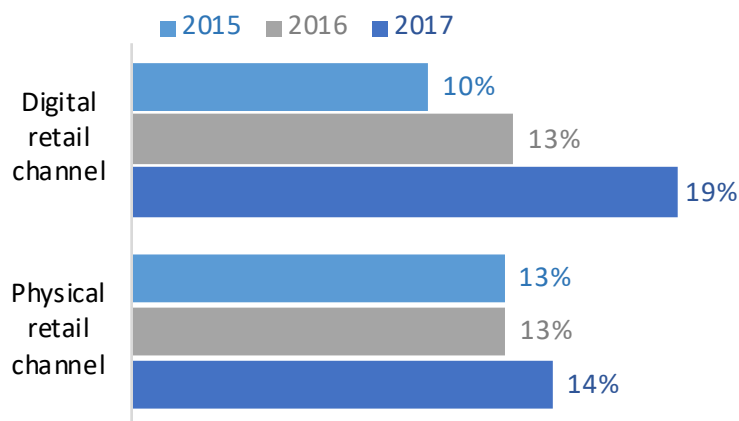
Social media platforms by format

	Paperback	Hardcover	Ebook	Audiobook	Other
Facebook	39.4%	25.2%	14.9%	3.1%	1.1%
Goodreads	6.5%	5.3%	3.2%	0.7%	0.1%
Google+	8.3%	5.7%	4.2%	0.8%	0.3%
Instagram	15.6%	10.5%	6.5%	1.7%	0.6%
LinkedIn	16.6%	10.5%	6.3%	1.2%	0.4%
Pinterest	14.9%	9.6%	6.1%	1.5%	0.4%
Reddit	5.1%	3.3%	2.0%	0.6%	0.2%
Snapchat	8.5%	5.4%	3.3%	1.2%	0.2%
TripAdvisor	9.4%	6.4%	3.6%	1.0%	0.4%
Tumblr	4.1%	3.0%	1.8%	0.6%	0.1%
Twitter	15.4%	10.2%	7.3%	1.9%	0.5%
YouTube	28.7%	19.1%	10.2%	2.6%	1.0%

Instagram users by retail channels

The following graphs look at social media users according to the retail channels where they made their book purchases (e.g., mobile app). We again find that those who are digital buyers are much more inclined to be Instagram users. Looking at the whole market, we found that in 2017 approximately 55% of book buyers are making their purchases online through book clubs, ebook/audiobook downloads, mobile app downloads, and online retailers. Of all book buyers who shop online, 19% are Instagram users; of all book buyers who shop in physical stores, 14% are Instagram users. Physical retail channels include indie and chain bookstores, discount bookstores, general retailers, and grocery stores.

Instagram users by physical vs. digital retail channels

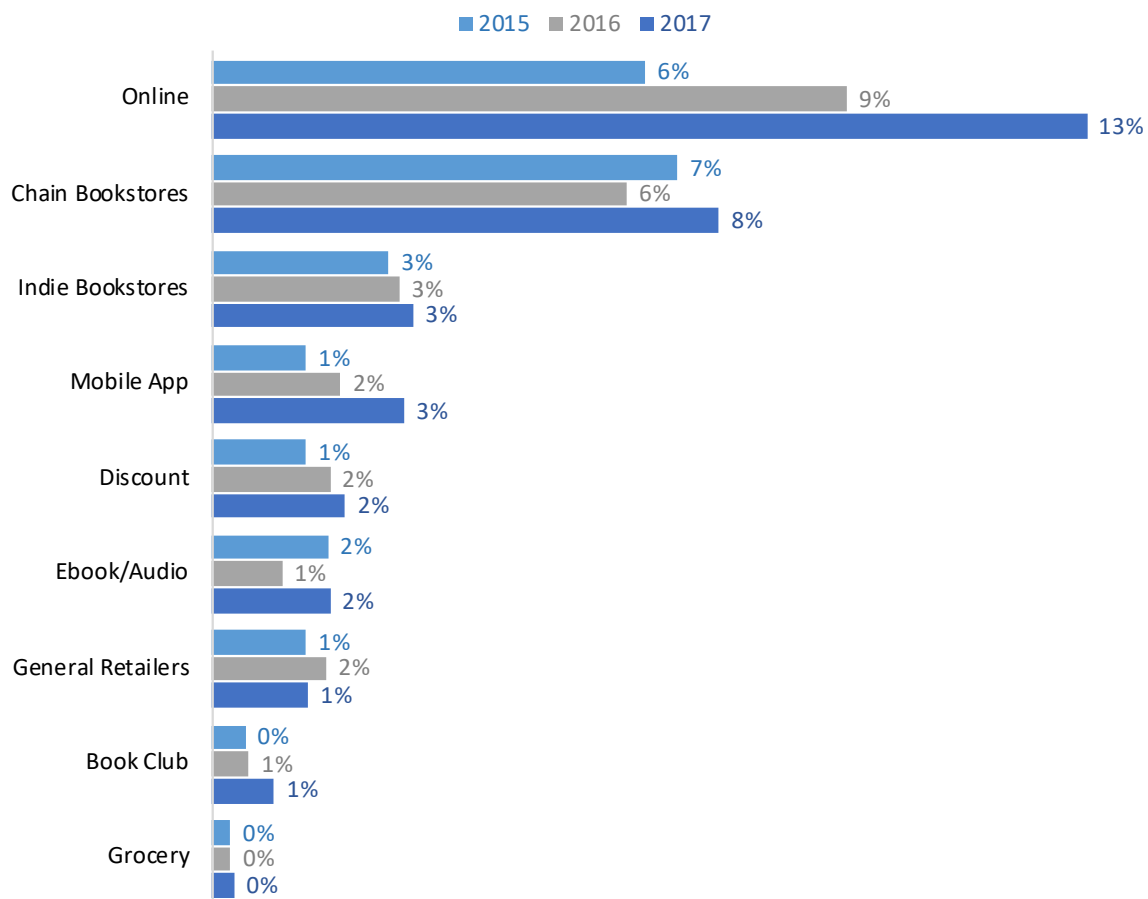


Social media users by physical vs. digital retail channels

	2015		2016		2017	
	Digital	Physical	Digital	Physical	Digital	Physical
Facebook	41.0%	52.0%	39.0%	44.0%	42.0%	38.0%
Goodreads	7.0%	8.0%	8.0%	5.0%	8.0%	6.0%
Google+	10.0%	13.0%	8.0%	11.0%	10.0%	9.0%
Instagram	10.0%	13.0%	13.0%	13.0%	19.0%	14.0%
LinkedIn	14.0%	18.0%	15.0%	16.0%	17.0%	17.0%
Pinterest	14.0%	17.0%	15.0%	15.0%	16.0%	14.0%
Reddit	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.9%
Snapchat	4.0%	6.0%	6.0%	6.0%	10.0%	8.0%
TripAdvisor	9.0%	10.0%	10.0%	9.0%	10.0%	10.0%
Tumblr	5.0%	7.0%	6.0%	6.0%	5.0%	4.0%
Twitter	17.0%	18.0%	16.0%	16.0%	18.0%	15.0%
YouTube	27.0%	32.0%	27.0%	32.0%	31.0%	28.0%

Looking at purchases by retail channel, we found that 13% of book buyers who shopped online are also Instagram users. Interestingly, even though only 2.9% of purchases by Instagram users were done by mobile app, only a small percentage of book buyers shop via mobile apps (5% in 2017), meaning that Instagram users account for about half of all mobile app purchases.

Purchases by Instagram users per retail channel



Social media users by retail channel

	Book Club	Chain Bookstores	Discount	Ebook/Audio	General Retailers	Grocery	Indie Bookstores	Mobile App	Online
Facebook	44.8%	60.9%	61.7%	64.2%	55.6%	47.7%	57.2%	74.6%	67.7%
Goodreads	6.9%	10.3%	9.3%	11.7%	7.9%	6.8%	8.7%	14.6%	13.5%
Google+	12.6%	13.8%	13.1%	11.7%	10.6%	20.5%	16.3%	27.7%	14.9%
Instagram	23.0%	22.1%	23.5%	23.5%	20.5%	15.9%	23.6%	47.7%	28.7%
LinkedIn	17.2%	27.4%	21.3%	22.2%	25.8%	13.6%	25.7%	33.8%	26.7%
Pinterest	21.8%	22.8%	21.3%	22.2%	21.2%	20.5%	22.5%	36.2%	25.7%
Reddit	0.5%	1.4%	0.7%	1.1%	0.0%	0.8%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Snapchat	18.4%	13.6%	9.8%	8.6%	8.6%	9.1%	13.8%	25.4%	14.8%
TripAdvisor	16.1%	13.8%	17.5%	21.0%	17.9%	22.7%	15.2%	23.8%	14.6%
Tumblr	10.3%	5.3%	3.3%	6.8%	7.3%	4.5%	7.6%	11.5%	8.2%
Twitter	14.9%	25.1%	20.8%	29.0%	22.5%	18.2%	23.9%	43.1%	29.8%
YouTube	40.2%	44.5%	42.6%	44.4%	45.0%	36.4%	43.1%	54.6%	49.0%