

‘Eating, sleeping, breathing, reading’: The Zoella Book Club and the young woman reader in the 21st Century

Maxine Branagh-Miscampbell,
University of Stirling, UK

Stevie Marsden,
University of Leicester, UK

Abstract:

This article considers the development and promotion of WH Smith’s Zoella Book Club and its success in developing an online community who share a reading experience through their engagement with the club. The Zoella Book Club is considered in relation to contemporary celebrity book club culture, as well as within an historical context that appraises the Zoella Book Club in terms of the construction and promotion of ideal(ised) notions of the young woman reader. Through its aesthetic, choice of books and rhetoric, the Zoella Book Club propagated, commodified, and ultimately perpetuated, highly feminised and domestic imagery to construct an image of the ideal woman reader in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: celebrity, influencers, social media, book clubs, women readers, young adult fiction

Introduction

At 6pm on Wednesday 8 June 2016, British YouTuber Zoe Sugg, better known as her online alias Zoella, released a paid-for advertorial video announcing the ‘Zoella Book Club’ (henceforth referred to as ZBC), an online book club in partnership with the high-street book retailer WH Smith. In the video, Sugg explained how she had been reading ‘non-stop’ in preparation for the club and had ‘basically been eating, sleeping, breathing, reading’ (Zoella, 2016a). She stated she had selected eight young adult books published between 2013 and 2016 for the first round of the book club, which would take place over the summer months

in 2016, and this was followed by an autumn selection in October 2016. Sugg described the selection of books as being ‘more diverse’ and having ‘more seasonal themes’ than the previous selection of books (see Tables 1a and 1b for full list of 2016 ZBC selections).

Table 1a: Zoella Book Club Picks Summer 2016

Author(s)	Title	Publisher and Year*
Jennifer Niven	<i>All the Bright Places</i>	Penguin Books, 2015
Sara Barnard	<i>Beautiful Broken Things</i>	Pan Macmillan, 2016
E. Lockhart	<i>We Were Liars</i>	Hot Key Books, 2014
Rainbow Rowell	<i>Fangirl</i>	Pan Macmillan, 2014
Amy Alward	<i>The Potion Diaries</i>	Simon & Schuster, 2016
Nicola Yoon	<i>Everything, Everything</i>	Corgi Books, 2015
Jandy Nelson	<i>The Sky is Everywhere</i>	Walker Books, 2015
Giovanna Fletcher	<i>Billy and Me</i>	Penguin Books, 2013

* The year displayed is the year the paperback edition of the book was released, as these are the editions used for the Zoella Book Club.

In June 2017 Sugg ‘relaunched’ the book club with WH Smith as ‘Zoella & Friends’. For this second incarnation of the book club, young adult authors, including Amy Alward, Juno Dawson, Jennifer Niven, and Chris Russell, were, it was stated, involved in the selection of the books for the club.¹ Sugg herself only selected one book, *Moxie* by Jennifer Mathieu, available to purchase exclusively from WH Smith between 29 June and 19 September 2017 (the general release date of the book, WH Smith, 2017) (see Table 2 for full list of 2017 Zoella & Friends Book Club picks). On the launch of the book club in 2016, Sugg’s fans and followers were encouraged to engage with the club using #zoellabookclub on Twitter and Instagram. WH Smith curated online content such as blogs, reviews and author interviews (available on their website), as well as hosting Reader Q&As and Author Takeovers on Twitter.

From the beginning, WH Smith claimed the ZBC would be ‘sure to excite and inspire young readers’, promising ‘plenty of opportunity for you to discuss Zoe’s picks with other readers online’, and emphasised its intention to create an online community brought together through a shared reading experience (WH Smith, 2016). The relationship between the online community and the marketing of the books as products to be purchased from WH Smith was established immediately, with each book becoming the focus of the club for two weeks at a time. During this time content specific to the book, such as the aforementioned reviews and author interviews, were released online and WH Smith sold the book for half price.

Table 1b: Zoella Book Club Picks Autumn 2016

Author(s)	Title	Publisher and Year*
Alex Bell	<i>Frozen Charlotte</i>	Little Tiger Press, 2015
Rachel Cohn, David Levithan	<i>The Twelve Days of Dash and Lily</i>	Egmont UK, 2016
Gayle Forman	<i>I Was Here</i>	Simon & Schuster, 2015
Sophie Kinsella	<i>Finding Audrey</i>	Corgi Books, 2016
Patrick Ness	<i>A Monster Calls</i>	Walker Books, 2015**
Meredith Russo	<i>If I Was Your Girl</i>	Usborne, 2016
Paige Toon	<i>The One We Fell in Love With</i>	Simon & Schuster, 2016
Sue Wallman	<i>Lying About Last Summer</i>	Scholastic, 2016

* The year displayed is the year the paperback edition of the book was released, as these are the editions used for the Zoella Book Club.

** Ness' *A Monster Calls* was originally published as an illustrated book in 2012, but the paperback version used by the Zoella Book Club was published in 2015.

Table 2: Zoella & Friends Book Club Picks 2017

Author(s)	Title	Publisher and Year*	Selector
Emily Barr	<i>The One Memory of Flora Banks</i>	Penguin Books, 2017	Amy Alward
Cat Clarke	<i>Girlhood</i>	Quercus Children's Books, 2017	Juno Dawson
Will Hill	<i>After the Fire</i>	Usborne Children's, 2017	Chris Russell
Brigid Kemmerer	<i>Letters to the Lost</i>	Bloomsbury, 2017	Chris Russell
Emery Lord	<i>The Start of Me and You</i>	Bloomsbury, 2017	Amy Alward
Jennifer Mathieu	<i>Moxie</i>	Hodder Children's Books, 2017	Zoe Sugg
Gary D. Schmidt	<i>Orbiting Jupiter</i>	Anderson Press, 2017	Jennifer Niven
Adam Silvera	<i>History Is All You Left Me</i>	Simon & Schuster, 2017	Juno Dawson

* The year displayed is the year the paperback edition of the book was released, as these are the editions used for the Zoella Book Club.

This article considers the development and promotion of the ZBC and whether it was successful in developing an online community who shared a reading experience through their engagement with the club. The ZBC will be considered in relation to contemporary celebrity book club culture, as well as within an historical context that appraises the club in terms of ideal(ised) notions of the young woman reader. This article will illustrate how, through its aesthetic, choice of books and rhetoric, the ZBC propagated, commodified, and ultimately perpetuated historical notions of highly feminised and domesticated reading, to construct an image of young women readers online in the twenty-first century. Through analysis of the use of '#zoellabookclub' on social media, most notably Twitter and Instagram, we consider the levels of engagement between Zoe Sugg (aka 'Zoella'), WH Smith and readers participating in the club to assess the dynamics and trends of the ZBC in 2016 and 2017.² This article will also examine how the book club was discussed in the media and positions the ZBC within wider discourses relating to celebrities as cultural intermediaries and the, often gendered, foundations of these arguments. For the purposes of this study, the status and role of Zoe Sugg, the founder and 'face' of the Zoella brand, as a cultural intermediary is understood in terms of Smith Maguire and Matthews' definition of the term:

First, cultural intermediaries are market actors who construct value by mediating how goods (or services, practices, people) are perceived and engaged with by others (end consumers, and other market actors including other cultural intermediaries) [...] Second, cultural intermediaries must also be defined by their expert orientation and market context. (Smith Maguire and Matthews, 2)

As will be discussed in this article, Sugg's position as an influential vlogger and YouTube personality with a large following has enabled her to become a 'market actor' who can 'construct value' and influence the mediation of 'goods', which not only includes her own range of make-up, homeware products and books, but also, as with the ZBC, the 'goods' of other cultural intermediaries (authors). However, while Sugg's status as an influential market actor has had a noticeable impact on the sales of hers, and others', products, her 'expert orientation' and 'market context' has, as this study will demonstrate, been questioned.

This study also sits within a body of academic research that considers contemporary book cultures in terms of historical precedents. Beth Driscoll situates book clubs within their historical context in terms of the 'historical degradation of women's reading' dating to the seventeenth century (Driscoll, 2014, 47). The condemnation of women readers and their reading reveals, Driscoll argues, 'features of women's shared reading that endure' such as 'the opprobrium it attracts, and its differentiation from legitimate, male culture and education.' (48). Danielle Fuller and DeNel Rehberg Sedo have made similar arguments about lingering attitudes towards reading, and particularly the development of large, public-

facing reading communities (as opposed to private reading groups and clubs). Discussing the popularity of online book clubs, celebrity book clubs and mass reading events in the early 2000s, Fuller and Rehberg Sedo note that:

Reading, especially the reading of fiction, may have become a part of popular culture, but the older cultural values that are attached to it appear to be in tension with its more recent cultural forms [...] Mass reading events (MREs) are one of these forms and part of a popular literary cultural arena that positively bristles with various media practices, technologies, and opportunities to interact with other readers. (Fuller and Rehberg Sedo, 2013, 15)

As Driscoll, Fuller and Rehberg Sedo indicate, as an historically regulated and hierarchical activity, the repositioning of reading as a public experience, or event, to be shared with the masses across different media and online platforms, brings to the fore longstanding tensions regarding literary and cultural value, and the role of the (celebrity) cultural intermediary. As this study illustrates, the ZBC is one of the most recent examples of an event in popular culture located around reading and book-buying, which, despite being situated in a contemporary, and primarily digital context, exposes tensions between old and new representations of young women readers.

The Rise and Rise of Celebrity Book Clubs

While celebrity book clubs are nothing new, there has been an upsurge in their popularity and influence in recent years. In the 1990s, TV personality and media mogul Oprah Winfrey launched her book club - the Oprah Book Club - on her US nationally-syndicated daytime television show. Winfrey's intention with the club - which had an impressive impact on the sales of books selected, with some titles seeing sales increase by over 700% following selection for the Oprah Book Club (dubbed 'the Oprah effect') (Donahue, 1996) – was to 'get the whole country reading again' (Bay, 1997). Similarly, the Richard and Judy Book Club was launched on their UK daytime chat show in 2004. This book club, which partnered with WH Smith in 2010, also influenced the sales of books selected: in 2004 the novel *Star of the Sea* by Joseph O'Connor saw sales rise from '50,000 to 85,000 thanks to the "Richard and Judy effect"' (Reynolds, 2004). Although both Oprah's and Richard and Judy's book clubs eventually moved into online spaces, they were originally developed as features for established television daytime chat shows (for further analysis of these book clubs, see DeNel Rehberg Sedo, 2008, Cecilia Konchar Farr, 2005, and R. Mark Hall, 2003). This differs to more recent celebrity book clubs that have been established, first and foremost, as online events that use social media and online platforms to engage readers. For example, in January 2016 the actress, activist and UN Women Goodwill ambassador Emma Watson launched the feminist book club 'Our Shared Shelf'. The club is hosted on Goodreads, 'the largest social network site "for readers"' which enables users to create 'virtual bookshelves

to be displayed to friends' (Nakamura, 2013). Watson's book club has had an impact on sales of selected titles but what is arguably more impressive, and more indicative of the club's success, is the size of the community it has developed online (Cowdrey, 2016). As Ramdarshan-Bold notes in her article in this special issue, 'there are thousands of groups within the Goodreads book community; however, OSS is the largest with nearly 224,000 members. The next biggest groups are the Goodreads Librarians Group with 77,179 members, and Oprah's Book Club (Official) with 29,554 members.'

Similarly, in 2015 Facebook co-founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced he was starting his own book club, 'A Year of Books', which he hosted through his personal Facebook page and dedicated website³. According to the site, Zuckerberg would be 'reading a new book every 2 weeks in 2015' and those interested in 'joining the club' could sign up for email updates 'each time Zuck picks a new book' (A Year of Books, 2015). The actress and producer Reese Witherspoon, who has been described as 'the undisputed queen of the celebrity bookworm trend' has also created a book club, inviting her Instagram followers to get involved by following #RWBookClub (McClurg, 2016). Finally, the reality television and social media star Kim Kardashian-West formed a short-lived book club in early 2017 following her return to social media after a short hiatus (see Marsden, 2018).

The ZBC and the Zoella & Friends Book Club are therefore situated within this broader context of the contemporary celebrity book club as an online and international, albeit Anglo-American focused, phenomenon. However, what made the ZBC a particularly interesting event was the fact that it appeared as a fully-formed concept. Unlike Emma Watson's club which was portrayed as being an initial idea from Watson and developed from the collective effort of her fans and followers, the ZBC was readily marketable to Sugg's existing fan base. Although the exact demographics of her fan base are unknown, Sugg has argued that her 'main demographic is 18-25 [years old]' (@Zoella, 2016a) in response to *Cosmopolitan* magazine describing her fan base as being 'pretty much any girl [and a fair few boys] between the ages of 13 and 17 worldwide' (Lumsden, 2016), the club's YA fiction focus suggests it was intended to appeal specifically to Sugg's teen-aged audience. Accordingly, this paper explores the ways in which the club has used Sugg's existing audience to create a community of followers who are, it seems, more likely to share images of non-reading that focus on the recreation of the Zoella brand and associated lifestyle aesthetics, than engage in conversations about the books. This objectification and display of books by ZBC followers exemplifies what Janice Radway calls a 'consumerist approach to the book' that sees 'its adoption and application by readers in the realm of everyday life' (Radway, 1997, 149-150).

Introduction to the 'Zoella' brand

Zoe Sugg is a twenty-eight-year-old vlogging (video blogging) superstar and cultural phenomenon. She started vlogging from her bedroom in 2009 and by 2014 had 5.3 million subscribers on YouTube. At the time of writing, she has 11.9 million followers on her main YouTube channel, 'Zoella' and 4.8 million subscribers on her second channel, 'Zoe Sugg'.⁴

According to her Gleam Futures (the 'digital-first' social media talent agency that represents Sugg) profile, Sugg has 10.2 million followers on Instagram, 2.5 million page likes on her official Facebook page and 12.8 million followers on Twitter.⁵ A 2014 *Financial Times* article summarized her role as that of an 'online big sister, agony aunt, ultimate style guru and key to the hearts and minds of millions of avid, not yet cynical, young shoppers' (Ford, 2014). Sugg's own range of beauty products and homeware, sold by the high street retailers Superdrug and Boots, broke sales records in 2014 and 2015 (Davies, 2014; Fearn, 2015).

In 2014 Sugg was signed by Penguin for a two-book deal. Her first novel *Girl Online* was released in November 2014, followed by *Girl Online: On Tour* in 2015 and, *Girl Online: Going Solo*, in November 2016. Discussing the signing, Penguin stated that Sugg had won 'a legion of teenage fans across the globe' with her 'girl-next-door personality' with Sugg herself reportedly saying: 'Since I could read I have always had my nose in a book [...] when I was around the age of 14 I had my mind set on the fact that I would one day write my own book' (Peacock, 2014). Her first novel broke the record for highest first-week sales of a debut novelist, selling 78,109 copies in its first week (Burling, 2015; Flood, 2014; Singh, 2014). In October 2018 Sugg released her first non-fiction title, *Cordially Invited*, a 'seasonal guide to celebrations and hosting' (Hodder & Stoughton, 2018). Despite receiving scathing reviews from readers and reviewers alike (Baxter-Wright, 2018; Shukman, 2018; Jones, 2018), *Cordially Invited* was the number one selling book the week of its release, with 19,804 copies sold in its first week (O'Brien, 2018).

Sugg is not the only vlogger to have successfully branched into publishing. One of the first YouTube stars to have a bestselling series of books was daily vlogger, and Sugg's real-life partner, Alfie Deyes, who released the first of his *Pointless* books in late 2014. Deyes' first book, *The Pointless Book*, reportedly sold 30,000 copies in the first two weeks (The Sunday Times, 2014) and sold 173,107 over the whole of 2014 (Cain, 2014). Furthermore, a number of Youtube stars released books in October 2015, including *The Amazing Book is Not on Fire* by Youtube and BBC Radio 1 presenters Daniel Howell & Phil Lester, (otherwise known as Dan & Phil), *They Let Me Write a Book* by New Zealand comedian Jamie Curry and *This Book Loves You* by controversial live gamer and Youtube star PewDiePie. Perhaps reflecting this boom, Gleam Futures, the talent agency that represents many of the UK's biggest social media stars, including Sugg and (previously) Deyes, announced they would be developing a literary division called Gleam Titles dedicated to signing 'digitally-minded writers' (Wood, 2017).

Although books by Youtube stars have adorned whole shelving units within Young Adult sections in bookstores, they have been criticised for being 'shameless cash-ins' and having little cultural value (Robinson, 2015). Sugg was a target of criticism in 2014 when accusations regarding the extent to which her first novel was ghost-written emerged (Blair, 2016; Flood, 2014). Some commentators argued that Sugg's use of a ghost-writer, and her failure to acknowledge this from the start, was disingenuous, with one headline stating: 'Yes, using a ghostwriter matters when your whole brand is built on being authentic' (Johnston, 2014). This scandal led to Penguin releasing a statement clarifying that the

author Siobhan Curham was part of the editorial team that ‘helped [Sugg] tell her story’ (Eyre, 2014). The apparent lack of cultural value, and authenticity, to Sugg’s novels has also led to accusations of her being a negative influence on young readers. In 2017, Sugg was accused of being responsible for ‘declining teenage literacy’ following the publication of the ‘What Kids Are Reading’ Report. The report found that:

While the top ten favourite books of children at primary school are dominated by J.K.Rowling’s Harry Potter series, by the time children have reached secondary school the top slots are occupied by the vlogger Zoella’s novels. (Turner, 2017)

Commenting on these results, the author of the report, Professor Keith Topping, said ‘Alas, the Zoella books are not as challenging as the J.K. Rowling books, we do have an issue there. I do grieve about children wanting to read books that are not challenging enough’ (Turner, 2017).

The ghost-writing backlash and Topping’s comments regarding Sugg’s apparent negative influence on the reading aptitude of young people arguably undermines the ‘expert orientation’ (Smith Maguire and Matthews, 2) that Sugg’s reputation as a cultural intermediary partly relies upon. Such negative press regarding Sugg’s authenticity and role as a legitimate and positive cultural intermediary echoes the kind of critique the social media star Kim Kardashian-West received on the announcement of her book club in 2017. As Marsden has elsewhere argued, Kardashian-West’s status as a literary and cultural intermediary was queried immediately by commentators and some members of the general public, with many people questioning whether Kardashian-West could even read (Marsden, 2018). Like Kardashian-West, Sugg is a new kind of cultural intermediary: one who has the potential to ‘defin[e] what counts as good taste and cool culture in today’s marketplace’ but being perceived, by some as not being able to ‘perform critical operations in the production and promotion of consumption’ and ‘construc[t] legitimacy and ad[d] value through the qualification of goods’ (Smith Maguire and Matthews, 2014, 1). Because of her unconventional celebrity origins and the perceived inauthenticity of her own novels, Sugg’s book club announcement was met with similar, albeit less vitriolic, critique, with journalist Amelia Tait arguing that the club was ‘cute, glittery – but all a bit vanilla’ (Tait, 2016). Tait notes how the fact that the announcement of the ZBC saw sales of the selected books increase by over 11,000%⁶ means there’s ‘a lot of people reading a lot of books’ and that ‘much has been made of the fact that the star is inspiring a younger generation to read’, but Tait remained concerned that ‘no one seems to care about exactly what it is they’re reading’ (Tait, 2016). Seven of the eight books chosen for the first round of the book club, Tait observed, were teen romance novels, with the eighth book being about a female friendship. There may not be anything ‘wrong’ with these books on their own, Tait argued, but she also believed Sugg ‘has a responsibility to expose her young fandom to more’, stating that ‘[n]o

one can deny that Zoella influencing teens to read is a good thing. But [...] she has a greater responsibility to consider the consequences.'

Such comments understate the kinds of themes and issues raised in a number of the books selected for the first round of the ZBC. For example, in *All the Bright Places*, one of the protagonists battles depression and suicidal thoughts throughout the novel, and ultimately commits suicide. Similarly, suicide, self-harm and domestic abuse are experienced and discussed by the protagonists in *Beautiful Broken Things*. As will be illustrated later in this article, a number of the readers who engaged with the book club appreciated the frank explorations of mental health issues portrayed in some of the ZBC books and discussed being able to relate to them in some way.

It is worth noting, too, that the assumption that book sales equal readership is an unreliable one. In 2014, e-reader and e-book seller Kobo announced that only 44% of people finished reading one of the bestselling novels of that year, Donna Tartt's *Goldfinch* (Haynes, 2014). Similarly, Jordan Ellenberg completed a basic analysis of reading completion rates using Amazon's Popular Highlights feature to ascertain whether highlighted sections of well-known bestsellers are scattered throughout the book, indicating readers finish the book, or clustered in the first half of the book, suggesting that readers give up half way through (Ellenberg, 2014). Although Ellenberg acknowledges that this methodology is 'not remotely scientific', his findings imply that many book buyers do not finish reading books. This is an important point to consider when discussing the ZBC, and, indeed, celebrity book clubs in general, since, as will be discussed later in this article, many of those who interacted with the ZBC presented their engagement through images of their *non*-reading.

The Zoella Effect?

Before moving into a deeper analysis of the levels of reader engagement the ZBC stimulated, it is worthwhile examining the impact of the various iterations of the ZBC on the sales of selected books to determine whether the club had a significant effect on sales in the weeks and months following book club announcements.

The day following the announcement of the first ZBC selection in summer 2016, *The Bookseller* reported that '[t]he eight books announced yesterday [...] have rocketed on Amazon UK, with sales of one – *The Potion Diaries* by Amy Alward [...] increasing more than 11,000%', a figure calculated by the book's leap from position 35,595 to 316 within 24 hours (Eyre, 2016). As **Figure 1** indicates, all of the books selected for the ZBC in summer 2016 saw a surge in sales in the months following the announcement of the club, with *The Potion Diaries* seeing the biggest improvement in sales (rising by 3878% from May to June 2016). The average sales increase for all of the books included in the ZBC summer selection was 1231% (from the month before to the month following the announcement of the club).⁷

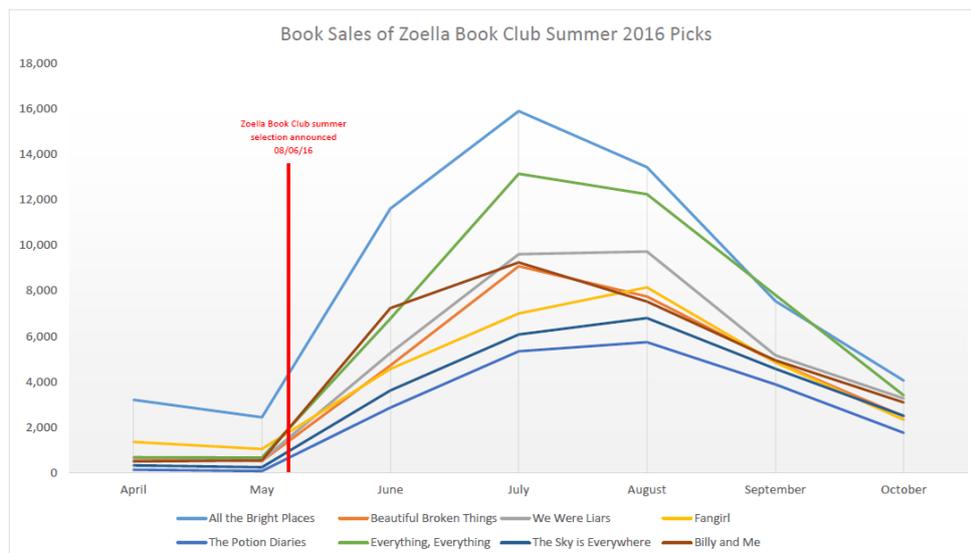


Figure 1: Book Sales of Zoella Book Club Summer 2016 Picks from April – October 2016.

There was a similarly impressive impact on the sales of the books of the second batch of ZBC picks in Autumn 2016 (see **Figure 2**). The average increase in sales in the month after the announcement of the second round of ZBC books was 2185%. Alex Bell’s gothic novel *Frozen Charlotte* saw the biggest increase in sales of all the books: increasing from 78 in October to 4,261 in November. While the caveat that there is a surge in book sales in general in the months leading up to Christmas should be taken into consideration, it is fair to hypothesise that the leap in sales for these eight books was likely influenced by their inclusion in the second round of the ZBC in 2016.

Finally, **Figure 3** shows the impact the re-launch of the ZBC as the Zoella & Friends Book Club in 2017 had on the books selected for this iteration of the club. The dataset for this selection of books is much different to the previous selections since more of the books were newer releases. For example, *Girlhood* was released in May 2017 and *After the Fire* was released in June 2017, two months and one month before the Zoella & Friends Book Club announcement on June 29 respectively. Further, as previously mentioned, *Moxie* was an exclusive release for the book club, so sales figures for this book are only available from July 2017 and started high (4,025), likely inflated by the exclusive association with the Zoella & Friends Book Club. The ‘newness’ of the books makes it difficult to assess the kind of overall impact the book club announcement had on their sales, however, if we remove *Moxie* from the equation (as there are no sales data for the month before) and *The Start of Me and You* (which, despite an original release date of 2015, has incomplete sales data), the average sales increase for the Zoella & Friends Book Club picks in 2017 was 1378%.

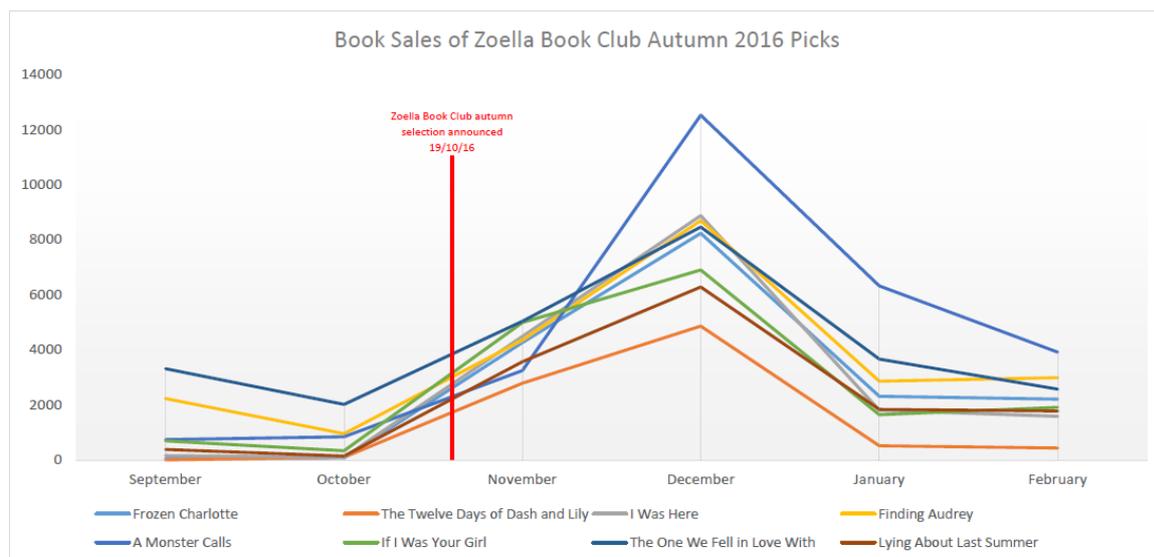


Figure 2: Book Sales of Zoella Book Club Autumn 2016 Picks from September 2016 – February 2017.

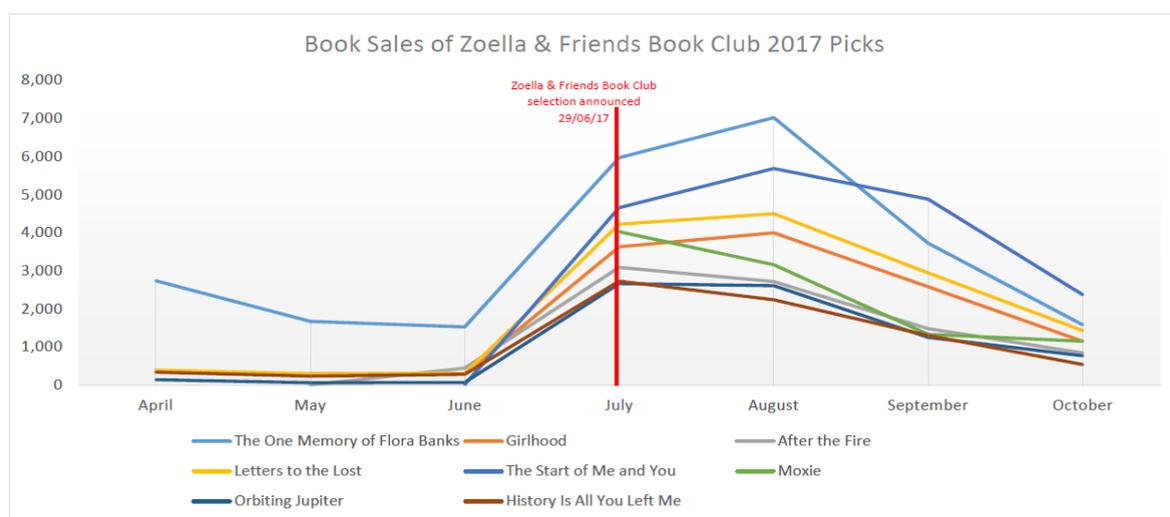


Figure 3: Book Sales of Zoella & Friends Book Club 2017 Picks from April – October 2017.

Accordingly, it is fair to suggest that inclusion in the ZBC had the potential to increase an author’s sales in much the same way, albeit on a smaller scale, as other celebrity-branded book clubs such as the Oprah and Richard and Judy’s book clubs.

Creating the #ZoellaBookClub Reader

As previously noted, Sugg’s profile as a prominent YouTuber and bestselling author meant that she not only had a well-established fan base, but also that she had a fan base who would actively transcend new and traditional media platforms to follow Sugg’s recommendations and the Zoella brand. The ZBC epitomized the significance of this kind of fluidity in her fan base since it relied upon both digital – online interaction via

#zoellabookclub – and traditional – special offers and displays in high street book stores – forms of engagement.

In the video Sugg posted revealing the titles for the first round of the ZBC, she states that she started the club because she wanted to:

[I]nspire more [...] young people to want to read [because] these days everyone is [...] on their phone, on their tablet, on their laptop, myself included and I think that's why I really enjoy reading because, I don't know, you're just using your imagination and creating these things in your mind. (Zoella, 2016a)

The irony being, of course, that in order for fans to engage with the book club and its other followers, they had to use their phone, tablet or laptop. Much like other online celebrity book clubs that have emerged in recent years, such as Witherspoon's #RWBookClub, the readers of the books selected by Sugg were encouraged to participate in conversations online using hashtags. In the video for the second round of the book club in October 2016, Sugg expressed how happy she was that viewers and readers had taken to social media to share their thoughts about the books:

It was [...] exciting for me to see how many of you got involved and read the books. I was actually, like, blown away by the amount of your reading and buying the books and, kind of, tweeting me about them and tweeting the authors about them and tweeting each other actually. (Zoella, 2016b)

This emphasis on the development of a teen-focused online community for the ZBC exemplifies the notion of 'networked publics', that is 'publics that are restructured by networked technologies' that are both 'the space constructed through networked technologies' and 'the imagined collective that emerges as a result of the intersection of people, technology and practice' (boyd, 2010, 39). Teenagers, danah boyd argues, are inclined to create online spaces when traditional spaces are unavailable to them, enabling them to blend the borders of public and private social networks:

Teens find social media appealing because it allows them access to their friends and provides an opportunity to be part of a broader public world while still situated physically in their bedrooms. Through social media, they build networks of people and information. As a result, they both participate in and help create networked publics. (boyd, 2015, 201)

As will become evident, this juxtaposition of being connected to other fans, or readers, online whilst remaining physically within homely, or domestic, spaces became an important feature of the networked public that developed from the ZBC and mirrored the Zoella brand more broadly.

In order to determine how readers engaged with the ZBC we retrospectively searched for comments shared by users on Twitter and Instagram that used the hashtag '#ZoellaBookClub'. We focused our analysis on these social media platforms as they were the platforms favoured by Sugg and WH Smith during the club. Whilst searching through these platforms using #ZoellaBookClub, it became clear that a number of trends emerged in the styles and types of engagement from readers interested in the ZBC.

There were a lot of readers tweeting directly to Sugg to thank her for the recommendations, ask about the books and ask about her personal reading habits (examples of such tweets include: "@Zoella I can't stop reading this thank you for recommending it x  #ZoellaBookClub"; "I got back into reading thanks to the @Zoella #zoellabookclub and I can't stop!  "; and, "Can I just say @Zoella book recommendations are just spot on   #ZoellaBookClub"). When Sugg held a Twitter Q&A session on July 20th 2016, for example, there were 620 retweets, 6,732 likes and over 500 direct responses to her Tweet announcing that the Q&A was live (@Zoella, 2016b), with many more questions being sent to Sugg outside of this conversation thread (although exactly how many is difficult to confirm as some responses did not include the hashtag). However, while followers appeared eager to express enthusiasm towards Sugg, there was little extended conversation about the books between readers. In many cases, even when readers posed direct questions to other readers it generated little conversation. For the Zoella & Friends Book Club in 2017, an award winning, but relatively unknown, book blogger and 'booktuber' (a person who posts videos discussing and reviewing books on YouTube), hosted a weekly ZBC chat.⁸ Booktubers, given their interest in books and 'book chat', may be considered legitimate intermediaries to be involved in facilitating conversations about the books. However, even when they attempted to initiate conversation amongst the online ZBC community through these weekly chats, these attempts prompted relatively small levels of engagement, with around eight to ten users commenting each week. These levels of engagement did not increase when the authors of the books being discussed were themselves sharing information about the Twitter chats and offering to answer questions (@WillHillauthor, 2017a; @WillHillauthor, 2017b).

There were similar levels of interaction between WH Smith and readers when Reader Q&A's and Author Takeovers were hosted by the bookseller on Twitter. During the Reader Q&A session for the first book in the summer 2016 book club, Jennifer Niven's *All The Bright Places*, for instance, the questions asked by WH Smith included:

Many fans have described this book as 'life-changing'. Do you agree with this and why? (@WHSmith, 2016a)

If you could ask a question of Finch what would it be? (@WHSmith, 2016b)

How did Finch and Violet change over the course of the book?
(@WHSmith, 2016c)

What message have you taken away from this book? (@WHSmith, 2016d)

Most of these questions received no more than ten replies from followers, although they received more ‘likes’ – the average number of ‘likes’ for the above four questions was eighteen – indicating that only a few committed readers actively engaged with the questions, and a slightly larger number followed the conversation and engaged less actively (i.e. ‘liking’ the questions, but not responding to them).

However, the answers provided by the readers who did participate indicate that they were critically engaging with the text. A number of readers pointed to similarities between the book and their own lives or commented on how it had changed their thinking towards particular topics. In answer to the question about the book being ‘life-changing’ readers replied:

[M]y friend is bipolar [...] it is easier for me to handle her (Tweeter 1, 2016)

Definitely!! It puts you into the shoes of the characters and shows you how it feels to be in the positions that are in every day. (Tweeter 2, 2016)

[...] it gave me such an different perspective on life and how I want to spend my time.x [sic] (Tweeter 3, 2016)

This suggests that for the small number of readers who directly engaged with the WH Smith Reader Q&A’s the act of reading was a transformative experience and the readers wanted to present themselves as serious and thoughtful to the online community who may, or may not, have been reading their comments. This notion, that reading can be a transformative experience, particularly for book club members, is one which has been discussed in previous examinations of book club culture. In *The Reading Groups Book*, Jenny Hartley argues that one of the key factors of contribution to a ‘good discussion’ in reading groups was ‘what people bring to the group’ including their own experiences and histories (Hartley, 2001, 81). Likewise, in *Book Clubs: Women and the Uses of Reading in Everyday Life*, Elizabeth Long notes how book club discussions allow participants to ‘reflect back on their own interior lives’ (Long, 2003, 145). This expression of personal growth and development from engagement with book clubs and reading particular books has also been discussed in relation to the Oprah Book Club, with Kimberly Chabot Davis noting how the ‘response narratives’ of readers invited to take part in the monthly television debate about Oprah Book Club picks are ‘personal testimonials, detailing how [the reader’s] identification with the characters led [the reader] to confront their own repressed feelings’ (Chabot Davis, 2004, 401).

Some of the Twitter Author Takeovers, which saw authors use the WH Smith Twitter account to answer questions from ZBC followers, also demonstrated how the followers

understood, and related to, the books. For example, on 22 November 2016, Gayle Forman, author of *I Was Here* was asked by a ZBC follower, 'What message would you like readers to take from this book?' (Tweeter 4, 2016) In a series of tweets, Forman replied:

I don't write message books. Which is to say I don't set out to write books that'll teach you something. Such a book would suck. But with I WAS HERE, I think I inadvertently wrote a book whose message, among others, is that mental illness is real. I hope the book helps people see that, helps people attach less judgement to it, reduces the stigma. (Forman, using @WHSmith, 2016e, 2016f, 2016g)

Here Forman maintains that she did not *intentionally* write a book about mental health and that a lot of the meaning that can be drawn from the book comes from the reader themselves. Similarly, during a WH Smith Twitter takeover on 21 January 2017 about Sophie Kinsella's novel *Finding Audrey*, Kinsella was asked by a reader 'Is Finding Audrey going to make me feel better about my anxiety and sadness?'. She responded: 'Oh I hope so. Audrey struggles with anxiety, but ends up with optimism and even manages to smile along the way' (Kinsella, using @WHSmith, 2017). Sugg herself has also emphasised the importance of acquiring new outlooks or knowledge through the books she has read for the book club. In her review for *Moxie*, the only book selected by Sugg for the 2017 Zoella & Friends Book Club, Sugg comments on how she connected to, and interpreted, the feminist themes of the novel:

I really liked that one of [the protagonist's] friends wasn't so sure about [feminism]. Sometimes I feel like the word feminist does kind of confuse people or they feel kind of conflicted about what they feel that word means and I feel like [the author] really addresses this very well in the book.[...] But I genuinely think it's a very empowering book. Great to bring awareness to equality and feminism. And just to kind of, I don't know, I think it's the sort of book that should be passed around and a lot of people should read it. (MoreZoella, 2017)

Much of the rhetoric surrounding both the publication of *Moxie* (the tagline of which is 'Time to fight like a girl'), and its inclusion on the Zoella & Friends Book Club, highlights the unambiguously feminist attitude of the novel, with WH Smith describing the novel as 'an empowering and unapologetically feminist story' (WHSmith, 2017). Accordingly, it seems that one of the intended purposes of the ZBC was promoting books that engage with serious, and topical, issues and debates to a teenaged readership and following.

Despite these indications of transformative reading enabled by the ZBC, ultimately, there was little in the way of discursive online engagement with the book club by readers. There were few interactions for the WH Smith Reader Q&A's, which were intended to

encourage discussion about the books amongst readers (and were, in fact, dropped for the Autumn 2016 edition of the book club), and the Author Takeovers cultivated only a slightly better uptake in conversation about the books. Likewise, the videos produced for the Zoella & Friends Book Club have, it seems, failed to inspire discussion about the selected books. Each of the authors created review videos about the books they selected for the club that were uploaded to the WH Smith YouTube channel and the majority of the videos (excluding that by Sugg, which has had 4,878 views) have had fewer than 2,000 views.⁹ Jennifer Niven's review video of *Orbiting Jupiter* has had 3,395 views and seven comments from viewers, two of which reference the book club directly: 'Just finished this book in two hours it's one of the most amazing books I've ever read. So glad it was part of the zoella book club #zoellabookclub xx [sic]' and 'This book ❤️❤️❤️❤️!!!! I am so glad it was a part of this book club! Seriously one of the most amazing stories I have ever read!!' The two videos by Amy Alward, for *The One Memory of Flora Banks* and *The Start of Me and You*, have a total of 913 and 1,879 views respectively, and the videos by Chris Riddell, for *Letters to the Lost* and *After the Fire*, have a total of 1,856 and 1,345 views respectively. The first of Juno Dawson's two videos was a review of *Girlhood* which has 2,016 views. For the second review video, Dawson interviewed the author of her second book club pick, *History is All You Left Me*, but this interview, split into three parts, has only 1,556 views in total. Sugg's video review, on the other hand, received substantially more views. WH Smith posted a fifty second extract of Sugg's review of *Moxie*, taken from a longer video from Sugg's channel 'Zoe Sugg', formerly 'MoreZoella'. The fifty second video has had 4,878 views to date, while the book club update video she posted on her own channel, which is over twenty minutes long and includes a general update from Sugg, has over 1.3 million views (MoreZoella, 2017). Even though Sugg has significantly more subscribers to her YouTube channel than WH Smith (which has over 5,400 subscribers), the fact that her fans' interest in the book club did not migrate to the WH Smith YouTube channel that was hosting exclusive content (with well-known Young Adult authors) related to the book club is telling. Such disparity in the viewing figures of videos related to the Zoella & Friends Book Club suggest that, for some of Sugg's fans, interest in the book club hinged on it being a *Zoella* book club, promising further insight into the life of their favourite YouTuber as opposed to its offering of book recommendations and interaction with authors.

The Zoella Lifestyle & Brand Aesthetic

The low level of conversational interaction and engagement with the ZBC suggests that many ZBC followers (i.e. those who purchased the books and watched videos about the club hosted on Sugg's own YouTube channels) were not interested in participating with the club in what may be considered a more traditional book club format (a group of readers sharing and discussing a reading experience). Further analysis of the forms of participation the readers undertook online, which prioritised a performance of the procurement and display of the books rather than the reading experience, demonstrates how the ZBC did not

function as an archetypical celebrity book club like those of Oprah Winfrey, Richard & Judy and Emma Watson.

The leading means by which ZBC followers engaged with the club was by sharing pictures (via Twitter and Instagram) of the books selected for the club, and there were several different ways in which this engagement manifested. One trend that appeared amongst the followers of the ZBC was the sharing of pictures of places where the book club was being marketed. ZBC followers shared pictures of WH Smith store displays with captions like ‘proud of you Zoe’ (see **Figure 4**), ‘Hello Zoella at Luton Airport’ (Tweeter 5, 2016) and



4:19 PM - 25 Jul 2016 from London Heathrow Airport Terminal 5

Figure 4: Tweet sharing image of Zoella Book Club display at London Heathrow Airport, July 2016 (username and profile picture blurred to ensure privacy)

‘Must reads in the @WHSmith @Zoella book club!’ (see **Figure 5**). All of these tweets were directed at Sugg (tagging her Twitter handle, @Zoella) and used the book club hashtag. This added these images to the #ZoellaBookClub Twitter feed, making these promotional retail displays part of the wider discourse surrounding the club on social media. This form of

visual engagement, highlighting the marketing of the ZBC books, is related to another key and markedly prevalent way in which communication about the club was presented on social media. On both Twitter and Instagram, readers would share attractive, carefully composed photographs of the book club books they had purchased.



5:23 PM - 22 Oct 2016

Figure 5: Tweet sharing image of Zoella Book Club display at WH Smith, October 2016.

There are a number of significant features about this particular form of engagement. First, it suggests that the element of the marketing strategy of the club – which deliberately

emphasised the aesthetics and collectability of the books – worked. The books selected for all iterations of the ZBC (including Zoella & Friends) were published with exclusive book covers that were only available to purchase at WH Smith. The differences between the original and ZBC book covers were largely subtle, with changes of colour to book titles and the addition of glossy or foil effects. This enhanced a sense of exclusivity for followers taking part in the club since they became part of a select community who owned ‘special versions’ of the books, and readers took to social media to share pictures of their ZBC books.

The second, and related, feature of this form of engagement demonstrates how the re-branding of the books made them an off-shoot of the Zoella brand. The cover redesigns focused on pastel colours and were promoted using images of Sugg reading in a cosy, domestic setting. This homely, highly feminised style encapsulates the Zoella aesthetic more generally and is particularly interesting when considered in relation to the ZBC since it echoes classic motifs of the reading woman through history. The carefully posed images of Sugg used in the marketing materials for the first iteration of the ZBC show her with simple hair and make-up sitting on a bed or settee and reading the exclusive editions of the books selected for the club. In one image Sugg appears as an uninterrupted reader, caught in a spontaneous, and seemingly natural, pose. She sits in the middle of a large bed furnished with pillows and blankets and her clothing is smart, but loose and comfortable-looking. Likewise, her hair is tied in a bun but is not perfectly coiffed, suggesting she has just woken up or is just about to go to sleep. Her eyes are lowered to indicate she is reading. In another image, Sugg looks directly at the camera, smiling. She sits cross-legged in the middle of a sofa, also covered in large pillows. She holds a book in her hands, opened around halfway through, the insinuation being that we have ‘caught her’ in the middle of reading one of the ZBC books. However, given that Sugg’s hair and make-up appears ready in this image, and she is dressed in jeans and a long-sleeved white t-shirt, smiling invitingly at the camera, it does not feel as though the viewer has interrupted Sugg’s reading, but rather that she is inviting us to join her.

Perhaps unwittingly, these images are reminiscent of classic artworks of reading women, a dominant subject of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when the status of the woman reader was under scrutiny. Examples of this include Jean-Honoré Fragonard’s ‘Young Girl Reading’ (c. 1770) and Sir Edward John Poynter’s ‘An Evening at Home’ (1888). Both compositions show images of the reading woman in low light with lowered eyes, usually sitting or lying on plush armchairs or chaise lounges, in comfortable domestic settings; a common motif in this type of portraiture. Kate Flint has argued that the common depiction of women readers in relaxed, domestic settings ‘prompts the idea of another element: the eroticism of the female subject for the male spectator or commentator, provoking questions [...] What is she reading about? What are her fantasies?’ (Flint, 1993, p. 4).

The parallels in the promotional photographs used for the ZBC and eighteenth and nineteenth century portraiture indicate that formally composed images of young woman readers have changed little over the years.¹⁰ However, whereas portraits of women readers

in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were constructed around the male gaze and commentator, the images of Sugg reading are constructed for the gaze of her young, predominantly female, teenaged fans. They are appealing and aspirational, and suggest that being part of ZBC brought the follower closer to Sugg and her lifestyle. Many of the images shared by fans on Instagram and Twitter are similar in their foregrounding of this composed domestic setting. Over 2,900 images have been shared under the ZBC hashtag (#zoellabookclub) on Instagram to date.¹¹ Many of these draw on imagery similar to that which appear in the original book club marketing images: soft furnishings, low-key lighting and pastel colours and additional elements of the follower images draw further emphasis to the iconography of domesticity. Consistent across Instagram and Twitter, users shared images of their books along with one or more of the following: hot drinks; baths; beauty products, which are often Zoella branded products; soft furnishings; candles; food; flowers; stationery; reading glasses; mobile phones; laptop computers; and, what appear to be, alcoholic beverages. However, very few of these images focus on the reader themselves, instead the emphasis is on the book as an object and how it is situated within a staged domestic setting. The images that do feature the reader can be divided into two categories. They are either selfies of the reader holding the closed book and looking directly at the camera as an act of proof of owning the book or, the other, more common category, are images that feature parts of the reader's body – specifically legs and feet – posed next to, or holding, the closed books and other objects, like those mentioned above. These are often positioned on a bed with low-key lighting and filters, or in a holiday setting, such as on a beach or sun lounger near a pool. A handful of the images shared on Instagram also depicted the ZBC picks on e-reading devices and tablets. These images would show e-reading devices being held by the reader, or placed on the floor, with simple backgrounds, and the device screens would be showing the covers of ZBC Books. One Instagram user in particular would regularly share images of her e-reading device with various ZBC book covers and one image of a device showing an audiobook of one of the books. She also shared a posed over-the-shoulder shot of her reading a book on her e-reader.

These images suggest that the ZBC followers are not aspiring to be seen just as readers, but are aspiring to a specific image of domestic and cosy femininity, propagated by Sugg in much of her content, most recently in *Cordially Invited*. They present themselves as middle-class consumers who value leisure time and who are loyal to the Zoella brand more broadly. Like the photographs of Sugg used to promote the ZBC to her fans, these user-generated images mirror motifs and features of the classic portraiture of the reading woman that have historically perpetuated the woman reader within the domestic setting. As Patricia Crain illustrates in *Reading Children: Literacy, Property, and the Dilemmas of Childhood in Nineteenth-Century America*, the image of the 'window-seat reader' in nineteenth-century novels, particularly Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, presented the young woman reader as a domestic, middle-class ideal – one that 'promises an aspirational consumer economics of reading' and positions the act of reading as 'a layered cultural fantasy [...] easy, dreamy, natural, cozy, sleepy, safe, comfortable, comforting, desirable'

(Crain, 2016, 3). Furthermore, when discussing a 1789 *Lady's Magazine* 'Hints on Reading' article aimed at women readers, Richard De Ritter notes how the article 'promotes an ideal of domestic femininity founded in ideas of privacy, interiority and inner depths' (De Ritter, 2014, 10). But, De Ritter argues, there is a 'fundamental tension' present in this representation of the woman reader because the idea of the 'private [reading] self' propagated by this 1789 article is complicated by the notion that 'reading is akin to a commercial transaction', making the 'formation of 'the domestic woman'' inextricably linked to the marketplace (De Ritter, 2014, 10). Crain and De Ritter's analyses of eighteenth and nineteenth century representations of the reading woman not only highlight the parallels between the imagery and motifs of the ZBC, but also the tension that exists in the use of social media for book clubs which, as previously noted, simultaneously rely on private (usually domestic) and public (usually online) spaces. The tendency for followers of the ZBC to focus on the book as object, and situate it amongst other Zoella branded products, not only exemplifies De Ritter's argument that reading is a commercial action but also exemplifies how the book, as Fuller and Rehberg Sedo have argued, continues to be a symbolic evocation of cultural value. In their analysis of reading as a social activity in the digital era, Fuller and Rehberg note that:

[T]he book evokes a powerful response in its devotees, and that, to speak more broadly, the book as object remains both meaningful and culturally significant in the contemporary moment. [...] Whether the interpretation of the book takes place in a virtual space or in a face-to-face setting, the book remains a cultural artifact (Fuller and Rehberg Sedo, 2014, 18)

Such parallels between the representation of reading women and the ensuing tensions between the private and domestic versus the public and commercial, have also been discussed by Beth Driscoll in her analysis of the Oprah Book Club and its online incarnation, Oprah Book Club 2.0. Driscoll notes how, one of the readers, Clarice Williams, engages with the club via Twitter, tweeting '@OprahsBookClub' that her 'patio, lemonade, & sunglasses awai[t] your book suggestions' (Driscoll, 2014, 78). Driscoll calls this description of Clarice's reading space an 'idealized domestic space' (Driscoll, 2014, 78). Driscoll continues, suggesting that a 'sense of community is [...] fostered through the club's persistent domestic logics', noting how some readers repeatedly use the word 'home', which 'places reading and book talk in the domestic sphere, and suggests the high value placed by readers on a sense of belonging to a group with shared interests' (Driscoll, 2014, 78). Through the sharing of images tagged with #ZoellaBookClub, which makes the images part of the online discussion of the club, the followers of the club, who are, it seems, largely young teenaged women, have constructed their own 'belonging' to the ZBC and, as boyd explains:

[e]mbraced a plethora of social environments and helped co-create the norms that underpin them, [so that] a wide range of practices has emerged. Teens

have grown sophisticated with how they manage contexts and present themselves in order to be read by their intended audience. (boyd, 2015, 43)

The favouring of images as a form of self-expression by ZBC followers is arguably an example of what Yasmin Ibrahim calls ‘banal imaging’. For Ibrahim, banal imaging is the ‘imaging of the everyday where we capture and upload the trivial and perfunctory’ (Ibrahim, 43, 2015). This is not to undermine this form of communication and expression which is particularly common amongst young adult and teenaged women. Ibrahim notes how the Pew Internet Research study found that image sharing platforms like Pinterest and Instagram are ‘dominated’ by women and young adults respectively (Ibrahim, 43, 2015). This understanding of banal imaging provides a means by which we may understand why the ZBC community expressed their engagement with the book club through images rather than discussion. The ZBC engagement mirrored the behaviour of Sugg herself, whose fame is largely built around her sharing of ‘everyday’ personal videos and images, a reflection of what Ibrahim articulates as the pervasion of ‘everyday image capture’:

Through pervasive image capture, the everyday gets transformed into an imagery of conventions which the wider public can connect with; where the banal is aestheticized and the everyday is commodified for consumption by self and others. It forms the basis to extend one’s identity and social capital in an era where ubiquitous creation of content online can be important for self-validation as well as endorsement by others. (Ibrahim, 44, 2015)

Accordingly, while the ZBC may not function as a “typical” book club, with regular meetings and conversations about the books, it provides a space for an online community of young women readers who are more likely to express their reading identities visually rather than discursively. And it was through this visual representation of their engagement with the club that followers expressed and garnered their social and cultural capital from other club followers.

However, problematically, despite the collaborative creation (between Sugg, WH Smith and ZBC followers) of an online public space and community that enables followers to express their reading identities however they wish, there was a tendency for these representations, from both Sugg and ZBC followers, to perpetuate age-old motifs of women readers in domestic spaces. Motifs which are, as the release of *Cordially Invited* in 2018 illustrated, perpetuated by the Zoella brand imagery more widely.

Conclusion

This article has considered the development and promotion of the Zoella Book Club and its approach to the promotion of reading and purchasing books to a particular following of the Zoella brand. Although it would be fair to argue that the ZBC developed a ‘networked public’, as this analysis has shown, through ZBC followers’ use of ‘banal imagery’ (Ibrahim,

2015) the ZBC still perpetuated historic representations and understandings of women readers. This suggests that, far from concepts of the ideal(ised) young woman reader in the 21st century being reframed or modernised via the creation of online spaces and uses of social media platforms, there is little progression of cultural attitudes towards, and understandings of, teenaged and young adult women readers. The propagation of the young woman reader in domestic settings in the promotion of the ZBC not only mirrored historic depictions of the reading woman, but also highlighted the club's ability to bring the commercial transactions of book buying, ownership and reading into the domestic sphere. In terms of impact on the marketplace, the club succeeded in influencing substantial upsurges in sales and the exclusive ZBC editions of the books generated much in the way of interest amongst the community, being viewed by many as collectibles. While WH Smith, and some fans, were unsuccessful in their attempts to engage the online community in discussion about the books, followers of the book club did engage with the ZBC through their performance as consumers of the book as object. Through this performance, the ZBC community aspired to, and reiterated, the general aesthetics of the highly-feminised and domestic Zoella brand.

Biographical Notes:

Maxine Branagh-Miscampbell is a PhD candidate at the University of Stirling. Her PhD research looks at the child reader in Scotland between 1750 and 1850, with a specific focus on school libraries. Her work is supervised by Dr Katie Halsey and Dr Bethan Benwell and is funded by the AHRC's Doctoral Training Partnership, the Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Humanities. Contact: maxine.branagh@stir.ac.uk.

Stevie Marsden is a Research Associate at CAMEo Research Institute for Cultural and Media Economies at the University of Leicester. She completed her PhD thesis, *The Saltire Society Literary Awards, 1936-2015: A Cultural History*, in 2016. Her research interests include literary award culture, women readers and writers, intersections of celebrity and publishing, and access and inclusion in the UK publishing industry. Contact: stevie.marsden@leicester.ac.uk.

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Notes:

¹ Amy Alward is perhaps the most unsurprising of the Zoella & Friends Book Club selectors. She was editorial director at Penguin Random House Children's Books when Sugg released her three *Girl Online* novels and her novel *The Potion Diaries* was one of the most successful books included in the first round of the ZBC.

² The ZBC did not run during 2018.

³ Mark Zuckerberg, 'A Year of Books'. Available at <http://www.ayearofbooks.net/>.

⁴ Popular YouTubers often use a 'Second Channel' for less structured content such as 'daily vlogs'. Paid-for advertorials most often appear on a YouTuber's 'Main Channel' as it tends to have a greater number of subscribers. Sugg's second channel was formerly titled 'MoreZoella' but following a recent rebranding of her social media accounts, her second channel has become 'Zoe Sugg' – suggesting an attempt to separate her more personal content from her professional and commercial content.

⁵ Figures taken from Zoella's profile on Gleam Futures and were accurate at time of writing. Available at: <https://www.gleamfutures.com/talent/zoesugg>.

⁶ This figure was also reported in *The Bookseller* in June 2016.

⁷ All data used in Figures 1–3 taken from Nielsen Bookscan on 17 June 2018.

⁸ This user also created weekly videos for the ZBC in 2016, regularly tweeting directly to Sugg to inform her of the videos.

⁹ YouTube viewing figures accurate at time of writing.

¹⁰ The ZBC is not the only book club or reading campaign that has presented women readers in this manner. Reese Witherspoon often shares images of herself reading in domestic settings to announce new additions to her book club (see <https://hello-sunshine.com/book-club> for examples). In the UK, the Women's Prize for Fiction (formerly the Bailey's Prize for Fiction) has also used domestic settings in promotional images of the prize's all-female judging panels and book club

campaign materials (see, Mosse, 2015; 'Announcing Our 2017 Judging Panel', 2017; #ThisBookClub, (no date).

¹¹ It is important to note that, when the authors started this research in early 2017 and before the announcement of the Zoella & Friends Book Club, the total number of images shared on Instagram using '#zoellabookclub' was around 2,400, suggesting that fewer readers shared images of their books and reading spaces in 2017 for the third iteration of the book club. The fan-created '#zoellaandfriendsbookclub' has only 42 posts to date.