The Influence of Romance Novels on Communication in Romantic Relationships: A Proposed Study

Gabrielle Piccirilli

Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between romance novel consumption and romantic relationship communication, focusing on idealistic expectations, romantic communication satisfaction, and online perceptions of healthy romantic communication. Drawing on cultivation theory and uses and gratifications theory, this study hypothesizes that higher romance novel consumption is associated with more idealistic expectations (H1) and lower communication satisfaction (H2). Additionally, it proposes that TikTok engagement under the #BookTok hashtag reflects distorted perceptions of romantic communication (H3). Using a mixed-methods approach, the study combines a 41-question online survey of 300–500 U.S.-based participants in long-term relationships who engage in reading as a hobby and a computational content analysis of TikTok posts. Data will be analyzed using Pearson's correlation for H1, independent t-tests for H2, and thematic coding for H3. Limitations include the exclusion of readers without internet access and a lack of cross-cultural analysis. This study deepens an understanding of how romance novels influence interpersonal communication and relationship satisfaction, addressing gaps in the media's role in shaping relational communication. Its findings hold implications for media literacy, relationship counseling, and fostering healthier communication and reading habits.

Key Words: romance novels, media influence, romantic relationships, idealistic expectations, communication satisfaction

Literature Review

According to the Romance Writers of America (2019), romance-themed books sell the most of the 8 major novel genres for $1.08 billion annually. Market research group NPD BookScan reported that the genre saw a sales volume of 19 million units in 2022, a level it has yet to reach since 2014. Social media, especially the TikTok community known as BookTok, seems to be the driving force behind this resurgence, shifting romance from a private guilty pleasure to a widely discussed cultural phenomenon.

However, research has also shown that individuals who report high exposure to romance media tend to have more dysfunctional or fantastical beliefs about romantic relationships (Shapiro & Kroeger, 1991). The unrealistic attitudes and expectations about relationships presented in media then become a part of the individual consuming it and are transferred into interpersonal relationships in which he or she is involved (Bradford, Rhodes, & Edison, 2005). For instance, individuals who reported habitually watching more romantically themed media had significantly more idealistic expectations of marriage. Consumers may also equate experiencing a similar romantic relationship as presented in the media as personal success in their own lives and a lack thereof as relationship failure (Garciano et al., 2023).

While much scholarly research has focused on unrealistic relationship expectations from romantic media, few studies examine how such media influences day-to-day communication with partners. Current research also negates the growing popularity of romantic novels as a form of romantic media specifically and has failed to examine or directly measure the influence of relationship dynamics in romance novels on shaping expectations and communication satisfaction. A notable study of the effects of romance novels on behavior within romantic relationships narrowed in on safe-sex practices, as romance novels typically contain the fantasy of unprotected sexual contact between individuals who are in love. Results indicated that women

who read more romantic stories had more negative views of condom use (Diekman, McDonald & Gardner, 2000). Younger people have also become increasingly more motivated to read and discuss literature, particularly that with romantic or sexual content, making it crucial to understand its effects in order to safeguard our impressionable youth and understand how individuals navigate their real-world relationships.

This study aims to investigate the impact of romance novel consumption on the perceived quality of communication in real-life romantic relationships, hypothesizing that increased readership leads to idealistic expectations and diminished communication satisfaction. The unit of analysis for this study is, therefore, an individual currently in a romantic relationship's self-reported measures on perceived communication outcomes with their partner, as well as a computational content analysis of readers' social media activity on the platform TikTok, focusing on posts hashtagged #BookTok with significant engagement. As romance literature and conversations about it soar in popularity, this situation becomes increasingly relevant to address and aims to encourage the adoption of healthy reading and communication habits. This data could prove useful to marriage and family counselors, relationship experts, and the general public, as well as contribute to the field of interpersonal communication and media effects. While this researcher is particularly interested in romance novels, it would be remiss to ignore the wealth of research that exists within other romantic media, including movies and reality television shows, as these findings will aid in determining which media factors are associated with romantic relationship communication satisfaction.

Before delving into the methodologies of this study, it is vital to address this literature specifically, and therefore highlight the gap that this research will be crucial in addressing. It is also important to note that much of the existing literature on the effects of romantic media, especially novels, was published over a decade ago, underscoring the necessity for a more

contemporary evaluation of this topic. The review will first discuss romance novels as they will

be conceptualized for this study. Then, the review will explain how it finds its theoretical

grounding in two main communication theories: George Gerbner's Cultivation Theory, and Elihu

Katz's Uses and Gratifications Theory. This will be followed by an understanding of how

romantic expectations can be translated into communication practices.

Conceptualization of the Romance Novel

The storyline of romance is present in a variety of media, from television, movies, music,

fine art, and this researcher's focus area, fictional literature. A universal definition for the

"romance novel" is not yet agreed upon, so this study will adhere to a working definition

presented in other work on the subject. A romance novel is understood as a "specific type of

romantic fiction, with a formulaic story chronicling the gradual development of a relationship

between a woman and a man" (Long, 2007, p. 4). The love depicted through the romance novel

is ideal, extremely passionate, and transformational for both parties.

While romance exists as one of the world's most popular book genres, it exists as a

compound category containing many subgenres. There are five main subgenres of romance:

regency, suspense, paranormal, historical, and contemporary romance (Kapic, 2019). Each

subgenre maintains the key element of a gradual relationship as its main plotline while

employing unique twists. The romance novel may also contain various narrative elements, such

as a first meeting, barriers that hinder the two main protagonists from being together, attraction,

declaration of love, endangerment of the happy ending, and the happy ending, whether it be in

the form of a dance, a betrothal, pregnancy or the birth of a child (Regis, 2007). These elements

and the way in which characters communicate with one another as they occur narratively may

impact the way in which a reader expects their own partner to communicate with them (Baxter &

Braithwaite, 2008). This is troubling, as dialogue within novels is often highly unnatural and

enforces extreme expectations, often of a fierce and violent protective nature. For instance, in the declaration of love, the male protagonist of Ana Huang's *Twisted Love*, says, "You're never touching another man unless you want him six feet in the ground. So yes, we're f*****g exclusive" (2022, p. 157). The idea of love so intense it could drive someone to murder is a common trope in romance novels, but it is entirely unrealistic—and troubling—when applied to real-life relationships. Nevertheless, dialogue such as this, when repeated and reinforced across multiple novels, may slowly distort a reader's perception of a healthy, satisfying relationship (Signorelli & Morgan, 1990).

Cultivation Theory Perspective and Parasocial Applications

The sociological and communications theory on media consumption, Cultivation Theory, serves as the groundwork for this study, suggesting that heavy consumers of romance novels may adopt symbolic ideals into their communication patterns, leading to dissatisfaction when real-life interactions fail to meet those ideals.

Romance novels can shape readers' perceptions of what constitutes a healthy, fulfilling relationship and imply guidelines for romantic success (Burnett & Beto, 2000). Garciano et al. (2023) applied the cultivation theory in their study on romance-themed novels and their influence on relationship satisfaction, arguing that repeated exposure to the dominant themes and ideologies in these novels can change people's perceptions of the world, causing them to view the symbolic realities portrayed as a valid and accurate reflection of actual life. Rubin (1983) concedes with this, discovering that viewers thought most television was a realistic portrayal of life. Additionally, they argue that individuals who adopt these attitudes may find it difficult to form and maintain healthy relationships due to the media's depiction of the "happy" relationship (Garciano et al. 2023). Zondarak also takes cultivation theory into consideration, asserting that adults who frequently watch romantic programs often expect marriages to be inherently

functional and to require minimal effort to sustain (2012). As Burnett and Beto (2000) assert, one

alternative approach to examining romance novels and their connection to real-life relationship

communication is to analyze the conversations that occur within the stories. This researcher aims

to extend these expectations to the realm of communication, exploring the dialogues and

conversations individuals may anticipate from their partners based on the interactions they

observe on television or in novels.

As individuals are cultivated to accept the media they consume as reality, they may also

accept the characters as reality and begin to form parasocial relationships with them (Burnett &

Beto, 2000). As they form these relationships of admiration with the characters, they also

increase in their desirability to be like the character, which can reflect into wanting the same

relationships as them or to communicate as they do (Hoffner & Cantor, 1991). Some studies

have shown that readers may associate so closely with the characters that they come to believe

they have become the character in the book (Burnett & Beto, 2000).

Uses and Gratifications Theory Perspective

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973), a communication theory that

discusses how people utilize media to meet their needs and feel satisfied when they are met, acts

as the second of the two foundational theories for this study. Through the lens of the theory,

romance novels serve as a means for readers to fulfill unmet relational needs, which may

subsequently influence how they communicate within their own romantic relationships.

Garciano et al. (2023) argued that the romance reader is an active consumer, aware of their

reasons for choosing the genre and therefore, of a lack in their romantic life. Burnett and Beto

(2000) also discovered that women use romance novels as a learning device, with one participant

stating romance novels help her to choose desired characteristics in men without having to go on

physical dates with them. Zondorak (2012) also supported this line of reasoning, stating that

readers will seek a variety of personal or impersonal sources for expectations and decisions

regarding romantic relationships, one such source being the media. She wrote that characters in

romantic media can "give rise to certain beliefs, or changes in beliefs, towards one's romantic

partner" (Zondorak, 2012, p. 5).

Research from this perspective by Long (2007) found a significant correlation between

motivation to read romance novels and relationship satisfaction, stating that women who read

romance novels for relationship substitution were less satisfied in their romance relationships.

Additionally, a significant interaction was observed for romance novels read per month,

idealistic expectations, and relationship satisfaction. For women with high relationship

expectations, increased readership led to a decrease in relationship satisfaction compared to those

with lower expectations (Long, 2007). Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch (1974) explain that

motivations for media consumption can include escape from problems or daily life, to serve

personal relationships, such as functioning as an aid in social utility or as a substitute for

companionship, to explore reality or reinforce beliefs and to learn about events. Long's findings

on romantic novels as the media mirror this, as the women studied reported engaging with a

romance novel for many of these same reasons. It is important, however, to consider why one

has decided to consume a romance novel before examining the influence of it on that individual.

A woman reading a romance novel to escape the pressures of single motherhood may be affected

differently than a woman seeking relaxation during a vacation (Long, 2007).

Translating Romantic Expectations into Communication Practices

While much of the existing literature focuses on how romantic media influences

relationship expectations, it typically stops short of exploring how these expectations impact

actual communication behaviors between romantic partners. However, given the well-

documented effects of romantic media, it is plausible that such media shapes not only

expectations but also the way individuals interact with their partners.

As one's beliefs about relationships shift, communication patterns with a partner are

likely to change as well. Relational Dialectics Theory (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008) supports the

idea that relationships are dynamic and shaped by opposing tensions, such as excitement versus

predictability. Romance novels often depict grand romantic gestures, which may create

unrealistic expectations and communication mismatches when one partner's ideals are grounded

in media-fueled fantasies. These internalized romantic ideals can lead individuals to mimic the

heightened language and dramatic interactions found in fiction, such as grand declarations or

ultimatums, which can disrupt authentic communication in everyday interaction. Burnett and

Beto's (2000) study illustrates this, as some participants reported lashing out at their husbands for

not meeting the heroic standard set by novels, leaving them confused and disoriented.

Moreover, Burnett and Beto (2000) presented evidence that women who read romance novels

often develop generalized ideas about relationships based on the characters they admire. One

woman in their study explained, "When you find the same characteristics in the one you are with,

it's maybe just, oh yeah, I do have a good guy" (p. 33). This suggests that readers not only

develop expectations but actively compare their partners to romantic heroes, which can affect

everyday communication patterns, sometimes in subtle but significant ways.

This study will address this phenomenon by taking a quantitative approach. Specifically,

it will employ a triangulation method combining self-reported survey data with a computational

analysis of readers' social media activity, particularly on platforms like TikTok, in which the

BookTok community exists. Social media platforms provide a unique look into the

communication practices and expectations of romance novel readers, especially in the often

candid and anonymous environment of online comment sections (Artime, 2016). These online

conversations provide valuable insight into how media-driven romantic ideals manifest in real-life relationship communication. For instance, users discussing books frequently disclose personal details about their relationships, with comments like "This ain't how my boyfriend talks—I wish I was lucky like that!" (@lizzieyoungswifee, 2024). Additionally, BookTok not only amplifies romantic ideals but also allows for the validation of these unrealistic expectations through community engagement. Readers frequently post about how their relationships either meet or fall short of the standards portrayed in their favorite books, influencing how they communicate these frustrations or desires with their real-life partners.

Drawing on the ample evidence that altered expectations of romantic relationships and comparison to real-life romantic partners exist as a result of consuming romantic media, romance novels in particular, the following research question and hypotheses are proposed:

RQ: Does the consumption of romance novels negatively impact the perceived quality of communication among individuals and their real-life romantic partners?

H1: Higher consumption of romance novels is associated with more idealistic expectations of real-life romantic relationships.

H2: Individuals who frequently consume romance novels will report lower relationship communication satisfaction compared to those who consume romance novels less frequently.

H3: Social media engagement, particularly comments on platforms like TikTok, will reflect distorted perceptions of healthy romantic communication among romance novel readers.

As romance novels continue to dominate popular culture, particularly among younger readers, understanding their effects on romantic communication becomes increasingly vital. By focusing on how communication is shaped through exposure to romance novels, this study aims to fill a crucial gap in the existing literature.

Methods

The following section outlines the methodological framework proposed to investigate the research question and hypotheses. By combining survey research with computational content analysis, this study seeks to capture a comprehensive view of communication dynamics within diverse long-term partnerships. The methodology is designed to ensure the accuracy, inclusivity, and practical relevance of the findings.

Participants

The participants of this study will be individuals residing in the United States of America who are in long-term romantic partnerships and engage in reading as a hobby. For this study, long-term is defined as 2 years or more of dating, cohabiting, engagement, or marriage. Studies on the demographics of romance genre readers indicate that the genre attracts a diverse audience: increasing popularity among Generation Z, sustained interest among individuals aged 35–54, and readership spanning various ethnicities (NPD Book, 2017). Given this diversity, this researcher finds it limiting to sample from a single geographical location. Additionally, to ensure the generalizability of these findings, this study must be representative of a diverse range of romantic relationships, including both heterosexual and same-sex relationships. The desired sample size is 400–500 respondents for the questionnaire, however, a minimum of 300 respondents will be accepted. The content analysis will focus on TikTok users who engage with the #BookTok hashtag and generate posts or comments referencing romance novels and romantic relationships.

Procedure

Survey research is the most effective approach for gathering original data to describe a

group that is too large to study directly through observation, such as the population of American

romance readers (Babbie, 2013). Therefore, this study employs an online 41-question

questionnaire, in which most questions are presented on a 5-point Likert scale, from 'strongly

disagree' to 'strongly agree,' while some are multiple choice or open-ended to obtain

demographic data. Detailed survey questions can be found in Appendix A. After obtaining

approval from the Institutional Review Board, this questionnaire will be administered online to

voluntary participants meeting the participant criteria via an online survey software. Participants

will be monetarily incentivized to respond and the questionnaire is relatively short to maintain

attention and increase the response rate. Three contingency MCQs at the start of the survey will

indicate if a participant fits the desired sample. If the response "No" is received for any of the

three questions, the survey will conclude there, and the individual will be thanked for their time.

Measurement

Consumption of Romance Novels

Recent polls show that Americans read an average of 12 books annually, or about one

book per month (Jones, 2022). Based on this, the threshold for high romance novel consumption

in this study is defined as reading three or more books per month within the genre. Questions 6-

11 measure consumption, with a higher score indicating a higher consumption of romance

novels, represented by the continuous variable, NovelConsumption.

Idealistic Expectations & Relationship Communication Satisfaction

This researcher drew on content from previous assessments of couple satisfaction and

marital communication to create the questionnaire, such as the 4-item Couples Satisfaction Index

(Funk & Rogge, 2007) and the 12-item Marital Communication Questionnaire (Bodenmann,

2000). Questions 12-22 assess topics such as conflict avoidance, views on partner dependency,

and expectations of grand gestures, with higher scores indicating more idealistic expectations in

relationships, represented by the continuous variable, IdealisticExp. Questions 23-32 assess

topics such as openness and honesty, active listening, and the perceived impact of

communication on relationship quality, with higher scores indicating higher levels of

satisfaction, represented by the continuous variable, CommSatisfaction.

TikTok Engagement

Questions 33-36 assess social media engagement on TikTok, particularly with the

hashtag, #BookTok. Question 36 presents optional user-tagging, allowing a participant's survey

data to be connected to their TikTok activity for research purposes. These responses will be

integrated into the computational content analysis.

Demographics

Questions 37-41 are designed to gather optional demographic data such as age range,

gender, sexuality, race, and household income to identify trends by demographic if a participant

is willing to provide them.

Proposed Results

To test H1 a Pearson's *r*-test will be performed to test the correlation between two

continuous variables, NovelConsumption and IdealisticExp. Questions 6-11 will comprise the

data set for the variable NovelConsumption, with a higher score demonstrating higher

consumption of romance novels. Questions 12-22 will comprise the data set for the variable

IdealisticExp, with a higher score demonstrating more idealistic expectations. H1 will be

supported if the data reveal a statistically significant correlation between higher levels of reported romance novel consumption and idealistic expectations.

To test H2, an independent *t*-test will be performed to see if there is a statistically significant difference in the means of frequent romance readers and infrequent romance readers as they report relationship communication satisfaction. To perform this test, NovelConsumption will be broken into FrequentReader and InfrequentReader categories using a median split. A FrequentReader will have a score above the median score, while an InfrequentReader will have a score at or below the median score. CommSatisfaction will function as a continuous variable, assessed by questions 23-32 with a higher score indicating higher levels of satisfaction. H2 will be supported if the mean CommSatisfaction score for the FrequentReader group is significantly lower than the mean score for the InfrequentReader group.

H3 will be tested by conducting a content analysis of the social media platform TikTok, focusing on posts hashtagged #BookTok with significant engagement. While the codebook is still in development, preliminary criteria have been established. To be included in the analysis, posts or comments must directly reference a romance novel or romance novel trope. A post or comment will be flagged as illustrating a "distorted perception" if it aligns with identified distortion types, such as the idealization of miscommunication, viewing conflict as passion, or holding unrealistic expectations. Each distortion type will be defined and supported with examples in the finalized codebook to ensure consistency and inter-coder reliability. The analysis will systematically examine these posts and comments, recording the frequency and patterns of each distortion type. The collected data will then be assessed for themes and trends, such as identifying the most prevalent distortions. Survey questions 33-36 also provide insight

into the participants' TikTok activity. If a participant has opted to provide their username, their

account and activity will be studied specifically and their behavior will be compared to their

survey responses.

H3 will be supported if the content analysis reveals a significant frequency and clear

pattern of comments or posts on TikTok that align with the predefined "distorted perceptions" of

healthy romantic communication and if there is high intercoder reliability in the coding process

to confirm the flagged distortions are both valid and reliable.

Proposed Discussion

If the hypotheses are supported, it would suggest that romance novel consumption does

indeed influence individuals' expectations of romantic relationships, leading to more idealistic

expectations and lower satisfaction in relationship communication. This would also confirm that

distorted perceptions of healthy communication are reflected in social media, specifically

TikTok. These results would contribute valuable insights into the role of romantic media in

shaping real-life relationship dynamics and the need for critical media literacy. The data could

contribute to relationship or family counseling, improved communication among couples or

emotional self-awareness, and the adoption of healthier reading habits for the readers themselves.

However, if the hypotheses are not supported, it would challenge the notion that romance

novels, and romantic media as a whole, have a significant impact on relationship expectations

and communication satisfaction. The lack of correlation or significant difference could suggest

that other factors play a more prominent role in shaping communication satisfaction in

relationships, or that the influence of media is overstated.

This study can contribute to the communication field by shedding light on the effects of media consumption, particularly romance novels on interpersonal communication and relationship satisfaction. It can deepen our understanding of how media shapes expectations of romantic relationships and communication, filling a gap in existing literature. By examining these connections, the study offers valuable implications for media literacy, communication practices in romantic relationships, and the broader study of media's impact on personal interactions.

Study Limitations

Like all study designs, this study has its limitations. The first lies in the procedure, as an online survey excludes readers without reliable Internet access. Additionally, participants are restricted to the United States, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to international or cross-cultural contexts. The study's triangulation may also be limited if participants are unwilling to provide their TikTok usernames, making it difficult to directly connect survey data to the content analysis. In a climate of constant online surveillance, some participants might feel reluctant to share personal information. Lastly, romance novels are treated as a single entity for the purposes of this study, despite the variety of subgenres and themes within the genre, which are not accounted for.

Future Research Directions

As contemporary research on the effects of romantic literature is quite limited, there are ample directions for future research. Given that romance novels are globally consumed, a valuable direction for future research would be a cross-cultural comparison, where a similar study is conducted across multiple cultures and countries. This would allow for insights into how cultural differences influence the effects of romance novels

on relationship expectations and communication satisfaction. This study could also be

expanded to a longitudinal study that tracks how romance novel consumption and its

impact on relationship communication evolves over time.

References

Artime, M. (2016). Angry and alone: Demographic characteristics of those who post to online

comment sections. *Social Sciences, 5(4), 68.* .https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci5040068.

Asplund, S.B., Ljung Egeland, B., & Olin-Scheller, C. (2024). Sharing is caring: Young people's

narratives about BookTok and volitional reading. *Language & Education: An*

International Journal, *38*(4), 635–651. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2024.2324947.

Babbie, E. (2013). The practice of social research (13th ed.). *Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.*

Baxter, L. A., & Braithwaite, D. O. (2008). Relational dialectics theory: Engaging theories in

interpersonal communication: Multiple perspectives. *Sage Publications, Inc.*

doi:10.4135/9781483329529.n26.

Bradford, M. B., Rhodes, N., & Edison, A. (2005, May 26–29). Cultivation of relationship

expectations through accessibility [Conference presentation]. *International*

Communication Association Conference, New York, NY, United States.

Bodenmann, G. (2000). Stress and coping in couples. *Hogrefe.*

Burnett, A., & Beto, R. R. (2000). Reading romance novels: An application of parasocial

relationship theory. *North Dakota Journal of Speech & Theatre,* 13, 28-39.

Diekman, A. B., McDonald, M., & Gardner, W. L. (2000). Love means never having to be

careful: The relationship between reading romance novels and safe sex behavior.

Psychology of Women Quarterly, 24, 179-188.

Funk J. L., Rogge R. D. (2007). Testing the ruler with item response theory: Increasing precision

of measurement for relationship satisfaction with the couples satisfaction index. *Journal

of Family Psychology*, 21, 572–583. 10.1037/0893-3200.21.4.572

Garciano, S., Cuevas, G., Geraldizo-Pabriga, M., Macabodbod, S., Yu, J. & Pinote, M. (2023).

Romance-themed novels: Influence on relationship satisfaction. *International Journal of

Literature Studies*. 3. 35-48. doi: 10.32996/ijts.2023.3.3.5.

Gottman J. M., Krokoff L. J. (1989). Marital interaction and satisfaction: A longitudinal view.

Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 57, 47–52.

Hoffner, C. & Cantor, J. (1991). Perceiving and responding to mass media characters. In J.

Bryant & D. Zillman, Responding to the screen: Reception and reaction processes (pp.

#63-101). *Erlbaum.*

Huang, A. (2022). Twisted Love. *Bloom Books.*

Jones J. (2022). Americans reading fewer books in the past year. *Gallup.*

https://news.gallup.com/poll/388541/americans-reading-fewer-books-past.aspx

Kapic, A. (2019). *The Notebook and the romance genre: An investigation of The Notebook as a

romance novel* [Master's thesis, Linnaeus University]. Digitala Vetenskapliga Arkivet

(DiVA) Portal. https://www.diva-portal.org.

Long, B. (2007, November 15–18). Women's romance novel readership: Motivations,

expectations, and relationship satisfaction [Conference presentation]. *National

Communication Association Annual Convention*, Chicago, IL, United States.

NPD Book (2017). The romance book buyer 2017: A study by NPD Book for Romance Writers

of America. *Romance Writers of America.*

Regis, P. (2007). A natural history of the romance novel. *Philadelphia: Penn Press.*

Rubin, A. M. (1983). Television uses and gratifications: The interactions of viewing patterns and

motivations. *Journal of Broadcasting*, 37-51. doi: 10.1080/08838158309386471.

Shapiro, J., & Kroeger, L. (1991). Is life just a romantic novel? The relationship between

attitudes about intimate relationships and the popular media. *American Journal of Family

Therapy, 19*(3), 226–236. http://doi.org/1080/01926189108250854.

Zondorak, D. (2012). *Romance and reality: The impact of viewing romantic media on changes in

women's attitudes toward romantic partners* (Publication No. 3499345) [Doctoral

dissertation, Capella University]. UMI Dissertation Publishing.

[@lizzieyoungswifee]. (2024, January 30). This ain't how… [Comment on the video "Guys in

books"]. TikTok. https://www.tiktok.com/t/ZP88u8ph1/.

Appendix A

Complete Survey Questionnaire

Questionnaire

1. Do you reside within the United States?
□ Yes
□ No

2. Do you enjoy reading as a hobby?
□ Yes
□ No

3. Are you currently in a long-term (over 2 years) romantic partnership?
□ Yes
□ No

4. How long have you been with your partner?
□ 2 years
□ 3 years
□ 4 years
□ 5+ years
□ 10+ years
□ 15+ years
□ 20+ years

5. Which of the following best describes your relationship status?
□ Engaged to be married
□ Married
□ Living with partner
□ Dating (not living together)
□ Not listed above. Please specify: _____

Please check the appropriate box after each of the following statements (#6-32) that best reflects your feelings or experiences. This series of statements will assess reading habits, romantic expectations and communication satisfaction. Please try to answer based on your feelings and experiences with your current long-term partner.

	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neither agree or disagree 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
6. If I sit down to read a book, I am likely to select a book from the romance genre.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. I read almost daily.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. If I have free time, I am likely to read a book.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. I actively seek recommendations for romance novels.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. I often purchase or borrow books from the romance genre	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. I read 3 or more romance novels a month.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. A romantic relationship should always feel exciting and passionate.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. Conflict in a romantic relationship is a sign that the relationship is not meant to last.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. In a strong romantic relationship, grand gestures are more important than everyday actions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. I believe true love should overcome obstacles effortlessly.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. My partner should prioritize my happiness over everything else.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. I believe in love at first sight.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. My partner should know how to make me feel specific without guidance.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

19. I expect my partner to understand my needs without me having to communicate them.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

20. I expect my partner to make every special occasion unforgettable.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

21. The best relationships are those where both partners are completely dependent on each other.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

22. In true love, partners should never feel the need for personal space.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

23. I feel that my partner and I communicate openly and honestly with each other.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

24. My partner and I can discuss difficult topics in our relationship without conflict.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

25. My partner listens attentively and understands my perspective when I communicate with them

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

26. I feel comfortable expressing my emotions and thoughts to my partner.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

27. I am satisfied with the way my partner and I resolve disagreements through communication.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

28. I feel heard and valued when I talk to my partner.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

29. My partner is responsive and empathetic when I share my concerns and feeling.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

30. I feel that communicating with my partner strengthens our relationship.

31. My partner and I regularly have meaningful conversations that deepen our connection.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

32. I am happy with the frequency of communication in my relationship.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

The following questions (#33-36) pertain to your social media activity on the platform, TikTok. Question #36 is entirely optional and not required to complete the survey.

33. Do you use TikTok to engage with book-related content?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I have before, do not currently.
- ☐ I have not, but plan to.

34. How often do you engage with #BookTok content specifically related to romance novels?
- ☐ Daily
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Never, but I am familiar with this hashtag.
- ☐ Never and I am not familiar with this hashtag.

35.Have you ever commented on or created content about romance novels on TikTok? If yes, please provide an example.
- ☐ Yes. Example: _____
- ☐ Yes, but I cannot recall a specific instance.
- ☐ No

36. Would you be willing to share your TikTok username for research purposes?
Your username will be used solely to identify if you are active on #BookTok and compare your social media behavior with your survey responses. Providing this information is entirely optional.
- ☐ Yes, my TikTok username is: _____
- ☐ No, I prefer not to share.

Please answer the following demographic questions. Your responses are confidential and will be used solely for research purposes. If you feel uncomfortable answering any question, you may select "Prefer not to answer." For each question, select the option that best applies to you.

37. What is your age?
☐ 18-24
☐ 25-34
☐ 35-44
☐ 45-54
☐ 55-64
☐ 65 and over
☐ Prefer not to answer

38. What is your gender?
☐ Female
☐ Male
☐ Other: _____
☐ Prefer not to answer

39. What is your sexuality?
☐ Heterosexual or straight
☐ Gay
☐ Lesbian
☐ Bisexual
☐ Not listed above. Please specify: _____
☐ Prefer not to answer

40. What is your race/ethnicity? Select all that apply.
☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
☐ Asian
☐ Black or African American
☐ Hispanic or Latino
☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
☐ White
☐ Another race/ethnicity (please specify): _____
☐ Prefer not to answer

41. What is your average household income?
☐ Less than $25,000
☐ $25,000 - $49,999
☐ $50,000 - $74,999
☐ $75,000 - $99,999
☐ $100,000 - $149,999
☐ $150,000 - $199,999
☐ $200,000 or more
☐ Prefer not to answer