

Generation Z' s Classic Composite Reading: A Postprint Study on Demand-Driven Diversified Seeking Behavior

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] Media evolution has facilitated the emergence of composite reading, with Generation Z constituting a vital force in classic composite reading. By exploring this cohort' s multi-level reading needs and diversified seeking behaviors, this study provides reference value for future upgrades of segmented reading services and the promotion and dissemination of classic works. [Method/Process] Based on hierarchy of needs theory, this research employs a mixed-methods approach, conducting qualitative research through semi-structured interviews to construct a “needs-satisfaction” model for Generation Z' s classic composite reading; quantitative research is performed through questionnaire surveys of Generation Z readers, utilizing SPSS 26.0 and AMOS 26.0 for data analysis and hypothesis testing. Service strategies are proposed based on the research findings. [Results/Conclusion] Under the premise that physiological needs are satisfied, safety needs, love and belonging needs, esteem needs, cognitive needs, aesthetic needs, and self-actualization needs all exert significant positive influence on the diversified seeking behaviors in Generation Z' s classic composite reading. Diversified seeking behaviors and perceived value mediate the relationship between Generation Z' s reading needs and reader satisfaction.

Full Text

Generation Z' s Hybrid Reading on Classics: Research on Variety-Seeking Behaviors Driven by Needs

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Abstract: [Purpose/Significance] The evolution of media has facilitated the emergence of hybrid reading, with Generation Z serving as a pivotal force in the promotion of classical hybrid reading. This study explores the multi-level reading needs and variety-seeking behaviors of this demographic, providing insights for the advancement of segmented reading services and the dissemination of classical works. [Method/Process] Grounded in the Hierarchy of Needs theory, this study employed a mixed-methods approach. A qualitative study was conducted through semi-structured interviews to construct a “Needs-Satisfaction” model of Generation Z’ s classic hybrid reading. Additionally, a quantitative study was performed by collecting data from Generation Z readers through surveys. Data analysis and hypothesis testing were conducted using SPSS 26.0 and AMOS 26.0. Based on the research findings, strategic recommendations for service enhancement are proposed. [Result/Conclusion] Given that physiological needs are met, security needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, cognitive needs, aesthetic needs, and self-actualization needs all exert a significant positive impact on the variety-seeking behaviors of Generation Z in hybrid reading on classics. Furthermore, variety-seeking behaviors and perceived value mediate the relationship between Generation Z’ s reading needs and reader satisfaction.

Keywords: Hybrid reading; Classic reading; Generation Z; Variety-seeking behavior; Maslow’ s hierarchy of needs

1.1 Maslow’ s Hierarchy of Needs

American social psychologist Abraham Maslow conceptualized human needs as a seven-level hierarchical system (Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper]) [14], positing that needs are interrelated and that higher-level needs emerge based on the satisfaction of lower-level ones. Maslow’ s Hierarchy of Needs has been widely applied across numerous fields including education, communication, and library and information science. For instance, Liu et al. [15] proposed establishing a knowledge service model oriented toward reader needs, employing text organization and data mining methods for deep knowledge service practices. Li et al. [16] advocated constructing university library learning spaces centered on needs hierarchy theory to achieve interactive integration between user needs and learning environments. Wei [17] argued that focusing on audiences’ multi-level needs and grasping deep-level patterns can facilitate structural reform and innovation in integrated media. Li [18] conducted stratified studies on archival user needs, finding that different need levels exhibit universality and hierarchical characteristics in user behavior. Guo [19] emphasized that youth users demonstrate significant belongingness and esteem needs, suggesting that aligning with user needs enhances service appeal. However, the application of this theory in classic reading promotion research remains insufficient. Generation Z readers exhibit distinct “self-oriented” characteristics in their reading behavior [20], focusing on their own needs and valuing the realization of reading value. Therefore, this study adopts Maslow’ s Hierarchy of Needs as a foundational

theory to examine the path mechanism between Generation Z' s classic hybrid reading needs and their attainment of reading satisfaction.

1.2 Self-Determination Theory and Variety-Seeking Behavior

Self-Determination Theory is a comprehensive theory of human motivation. It proposes that individuals' intrinsic psychological needs, when satisfied, continuously generate advanced human behaviors characterized by autonomy, competence, and relatedness [21]. Han [22] studied factors influencing university students' reading intentions, finding that readers' autonomous motivation and satisfaction of basic psychological needs significantly and positively affect reading willingness. Zhang et al. [23] used Self-Determination Theory as a framework to construct a mechanism for users' continuous usage intention in maker spaces, emphasizing that satisfying users' basic psychological needs enhances their sustained participation. Chen et al. [24] explored the integration of internal and external motivations driving innovative behavior in the context of innovation and entrepreneurship competitions. This study posits that variety-seeking behavior in classic hybrid reading can be viewed as an expression of reader self-determination—where readers, based on full awareness of their own needs (such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness) and environmental information (such as media characteristics and content quality), exercise autonomous control and free choice over their behaviors. According to Self-Determination Theory, readers' satisfaction of autonomy through variety-seeking behavior can stimulate their intrinsic motivation, promoting active engagement in deep reading, while competence and relatedness further enhance reading investment and sustained behavior.

Variety-seeking behavior represents the pursuit of change, autonomous choice, and utility maximization—a “selective strategy” universally present in human behavior, originally studied in psychology. Leuba and Hebb proposed that individuals attempt different stimulus-seeking approaches during learning to achieve optimal stimulation levels, thereby exhibiting variety-seeking behavior [25]. Levav et al. [26] argued that variety-seeking behavior arises from subjects' preference for novelty, change, and diversity, and their aversion to boredom from repetition. Thrailkill et al. [27] found that when faced with diverse food choices, humans and animals demonstrate stronger appetitive responses than with single-food options, with environmental stimuli being core factors influencing variety-seeking behavior. Existing research on variety-seeking behavior covers Maslow' s seven-level hierarchy of needs (Table 1), among which physiological needs constitute the most fundamental human requirements. This study' s focus on classic hybrid reading is premised on the satisfaction of Generation Z readers' physiological needs.

Table 1 Research on the Motivations Behind Subjects' Variety-Seeking Behavior

Need Level	Representative Studies	Core Motivation
Security Needs	Fan et al. [28]; Zou et al. [29]; Jeong et al. [30]; Yoon et al. [31]	Sense of control, desire for order; compensation for lack of control; avoidance of future uncertainty
Belongingness & Love Needs, Esteem Needs	McAlister et al. [32]; Kahneman et al. [33]	Interpersonal influence, desire for group affiliation or personal identity; desire for group conformity
Cognitive Needs, Self-Actualization Needs	Murray et al. [34]; Yan [35]; Deng et al. [36]; Sang et al. [37]	Others' recognition; desire for uniqueness and distinctiveness; sensory stimulation preference; intrinsic hedonism, obtaining pleasure and beauty; ability to process complex or ambiguous stimuli; curiosity, exploratory desire

Additionally, research on the dynamic attribute satiation model suggests that a product attribute can provide users with peak-level satisfaction, but beyond that peak, users crave alternative attributes or satisfactions, leading to variety-seeking behavior [38]—in other words, satisfaction is the purpose of variety-seeking behavior.

2.1 Research Method Design

To ensure scientific rigor and reliability in exploring Generation Z's group characteristics and multi-level needs, this study employed a mixed-methods approach. The first phase involved qualitative research through semi-structured interviews to refine the segmented needs of Generation Z readers in classic hybrid reading and establish a research model (Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper]). The second phase conducted quantitative research based on the research model, analyzing the status of Generation Z readers' needs and satisfaction in classic hybrid reading, as well as the mediating effects of variety-seeking behavior.

Figure 2 Research Model Construction Roadmap

2.2 Interview Data Analysis

To ensure data diversity, the authors recruited 18 Generation Z hybrid readers aged 15–29 from provinces including Fujian, Shaanxi, Shandong, Jiangxi, and Jilin via the internet, comprising 11 males and 7 females. Respondents also met the following criteria: fondness for reading with content involving classic works, proficient use of smart devices with long-term multi-media hybrid reading experience, and hybrid reading duration of six months or more.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted via WeChat or telephone, with interview recordings made after obtaining respondents' consent. The interview outline questions were appropriately expanded based on actual circumstances, and the recorded data were transcribed and analyzed. To protect respondent privacy, the 18 interviewees were represented by codes A1–A18.

This study conducted text organization and grounded research on interview data based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The first and second authors used NVIVO 14 software to conduct open coding and review coding results separately, with discrepancies discussed within the research team. After multiple analyses, 12 axial codes were extracted: self-determination, autonomous control, community belonging, interactive influence, achievement and confidence, recognition and respect, mental enhancement, knowledge acquisition, entertainment and stress relief, sensory pleasure, self-transcendence, and self-worth. These were ultimately categorized into six selective codes of needs. Saturation testing was conducted by appropriately increasing the sample size; saturation was considered achieved when no new conceptual categories emerged. Detailed results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Interview Data Analysis: Descriptions of Generation Z Readers' Needs in Classic Hybrid Reading

Need Category	Core Concept	Description	Respondent Codes
Self-Actualization Needs	Self-Worth	Pursuing self-worth through classic hybrid reading	A1/A4/A6/A7/A8/A10/A13/A15/A17/A18
	Self-Transcendence	Enhancing personal capabilities through classic hybrid reading	A7/A8/A9/A14/A15/A18

Need Category	Core Concept	Description	Respondent Codes
Aesthetic Needs	Sensory Pleasure	Hoping classic hybrid reading brings beautiful and pleasant sensory experiences	A1/A3/A4/A7/A8/A9/A10/A12/A13/A14/A15/A17
	Entertainment & Stress Relief	Hoping to use classic hybrid reading for entertainment, leisure, and relaxation	A1/A2/A6/A8/A10/A11/A12/A16/A17
Cognitive Needs	Knowledge Acquisition	Exploring new knowledge and understanding through classic hybrid reading	A1/A2/A5/A6/A7/A8/A9/A10/A14/A15/A16/A17
	Mental Enhancement	Expanding horizons and enriching experiences through classic hybrid reading	A1/A2/A3/A4/A5/A6/A7/A9/A10/A11/A12/A16/A17
Esteem Needs	Recognition & Respect	Gaining respect from others through interactive expression during reading	A1/A2/A3/A4/A5/A6/A7/A9/A10/A11/A12/A16/A17
	Achievement & Confidence	Gaining achievement and confidence through interactive expression during reading	A1/A5/A6/A7/A8/A9/A12/A13/A14/A15/A17
Belongingness & Love Needs	Interactive Influence	Participating in reading-related social activities to positively influence self and others	A1/A4/A5/A6/A7/A8/A9/A10/A11/A12/A13/A14/A17

Need Category	Core Concept	Description	Respondent Codes
Security Needs	Community Belonging	Participating in reading-related social activities to gain support, attention, and group belonging	A1/A4/A6/A8/A9/A10/A12/A14/A15/A17
	Autonomous Control	Having complete control over one's classic reading behaviors with autonomous intention	A5/A6/A7/A8/A9/A10/A11/A14/A15/A16/A17/A
	Self-Determination	Having freedom to choose classic reading resources	A1/A3/A4/A5/A6/A7/A8/A9/A12/A14/A15/A16/

This qualitative interview study transcends existing research' s generalized descriptions of Generation Z readers' reading needs, offering in-depth analysis from the perspective of classic reading to dissect the segmented forms of segmented reading needs and their behavioral motivations, revealing differentiated characteristics among needs. The qualitative research supported the model construction and scale design for the quantitative study. Interview descriptions of readers' variety-seeking behaviors in classic hybrid reading provided direct evidence for item optimization, ensuring items were practical and applicable, thereby achieving effective integration of theoretical discussion and empirical analysis.

2.3.1 Influence of Various Level Needs on Variety-Seeking Behavior

Interview data analysis indicated that Generation Z readers' needs in classic hybrid reading encompass the second through seventh levels of Maslow' s hierarchy. Based on this, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H1: Security needs have a positive influence on Generation Z' s variety-seeking behavior in classic hybrid reading.

H2: Belongingness and love needs have a positive influence on Generation Z' s variety-seeking behavior in classic hybrid reading.

H3: Esteem needs have a positive influence on Generation Z' s variety-seeking behavior in classic hybrid reading.

H4: Cognitive needs have a positive influence on Generation Z' s variety-seeking behavior in classic hybrid reading.

H5: Aesthetic needs have a positive influence on Generation Z' s variety-seeking behavior in classic hybrid reading.

H6: Self-actualization needs have a positive influence on Generation Z' s variety-seeking behavior in classic hybrid reading.

2.3.2 Influence of Variety-Seeking Behavior on Reader Satisfaction

Reader satisfaction is an internal emotional contentment generated when readers' objective judgments of reading needs, environmental factors, and reading behaviors are compared with their subjective value perceptions. Yan et al. [39] identified satisfaction as comprising participation satisfaction, identification satisfaction, and gain satisfaction. In classic hybrid reading, participation satisfaction manifests as Generation Z readers' autonomous selection of reading factors such as time, content, media, and modes through variety-seeking behavior, enabling deep interaction with content. Identification satisfaction manifests as variety-seeking behavior enabling readers to gain group acceptance, respect, and support. Gain satisfaction manifests as readers acquiring knowledge, pleasure, and growth through variety-seeking behavior, thereby feeling satisfied. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H7: Variety-seeking behavior has a positive influence on reader satisfaction.

2.3.3 Mediating Effect of Variety-Seeking Behavior and Perceived Value

Comparing with existing research, Huang et al. [3] and Lin et al. [40] also proposed that composite value is a fundamental characteristic of hybrid reading, representing value re-perceived by readers in media-composite, behavior-composite reading activities, including knowledge value, aesthetic value, entertainment value, etc. During interviews, multiple respondents from different regions discussed value experiences obtained or perceived through classic hybrid reading. For instance, all respondents actively acknowledged the knowledge value of classic hybrid reading; A1, A2, A6, A10, A12, and A16 emphasized entertainment value; A6, A7, A9, A14, and A15 preferred social value; A1, A7, A8, A10, and A14 highlighted aesthetic value; and A1, A4, A6, A8, A17, and A18 showed clear perception of self-actualization value. Perceived value theory posits that the greater the value users perceive, the higher their psychological satisfaction [41]. Therefore, this study speculates that variety-seeking behavior and perceived value mediate the relationship between Generation Z' s classic hybrid reading needs and reader satisfaction. The following hypotheses were proposed:

H8: Variety-seeking behavior has a positive influence on perceived value.

H9: Perceived value has a positive influence on reader satisfaction.

2.3.4 Research Model

Based on the above analysis and research hypotheses, this study constructed a conceptual model (Figure 3 [Figure 3: see original paper]) with Generation Z' s multi-level reading needs in classic hybrid reading as antecedent variables, variety-seeking behavior and perceived value as mediating variables, and reader satisfaction as the outcome variable.

Figure 3 Generation Z' s Classic Hybrid Reading “Needs-Satisfaction” Model

3.1 Measurement Tool Design

This study' s model includes nine variables. Drawing upon established scales and existing research findings, the authors designed a set of measurement items for each variable, adjusting and supplementing some items based on interview content to form the survey questionnaire. The questionnaire comprises three parts: research overview, demographic information, and scale items, totaling 37 questions. The scale items section used a 5-point Likert scale, with options A-B-C-D-E representing “strongly disagree,” “disagree,” “neutral,” “agree,” and “strongly agree,” respectively. The nine model variables corresponded to 31 observed items (Table 3), maximizing research scientificity and reliability.

Table 3 Questionnaire Scale Design and Item Sources

Variable	Sample Item	Source
Security Needs	I hope my classic hybrid reading behavior is out of my own intention	Hurault et al. [42]; Zhang [43]; Goodenow [44]
	I hope my classic hybrid reading is planned and conducted by myself, and I have complete control over my behavior	
	I hope my choice of classic hybrid reading resources is based on my free will	
Belongingness & Love Needs	I hope to make friends and enhance communication through classic hybrid reading, bringing positive influence to others	Rosenberg [45]; Peng et al. [46]; Litman et al. [47]

Variable	Sample Item	Source
Esteem Needs	I hope my viewpoints can be accepted by others in hybrid reading social interactions, and they will give me attention and support	
	I hope I am a member of the community in my favorite reading groups	
	I believe I am a valuable person and hope to gain recognition from others through classic hybrid reading	
	I hope to gain more respect for myself through classic hybrid reading	
Cognitive Needs	I hope to demonstrate my abilities and gain a sense of achievement through classic hybrid reading	
	I hope to better learn relevant knowledge and skills through classic hybrid reading	
	I hope to better explore new knowledge through classic hybrid reading	
Aesthetic Needs	I hope to broaden my horizons, enrich my experiences, and enhance cognition through classic hybrid reading	
	I hope classic hybrid reading can provide me with aesthetically pleasing and vivid content	
	I hope classic hybrid reading can bring me rich and pleasant reading experiences	
	I hope to relax, decompress, and balance my body and mind through classic hybrid reading	
Self-Actualization Needs	I hope to better understand myself and realize my self-worth through classic hybrid reading	

Variable	Sample Item	Source
Variety-Seeking Behavior	I hope to pursue self-improvement through classic hybrid reading	Zhang [48]; Wang et al. [49]; van Trijp [50]
	I hope to challenge and surpass myself, and improve myself through classic hybrid reading	
	I will actively seek diverse media channels to conduct classic hybrid reading	
Perceived Value	I will choose suitable reading modes based on context to conduct classic hybrid reading	Zhang et al. [51]
	I will diversely combine and match reading resources to effectively conduct classic hybrid reading	
	Through variety-seeking behavior, I obtained valuable information that helped knowledge understanding and skill mastery	
	Through variety-seeking behavior, I increased valuable interactive communication, promoting exchange between individuals and organizations	
	Through variety-seeking behavior, I conducted valuable entertainment and leisure, releasing pressure and emotions, bringing me physical and mental pleasure	
Reader Satisfaction	Through variety-seeking behavior, I gained recognition and affirmation from others	Du et al. [52]; Diener et al. [53]
	Through variety-seeking behavior, I took charge of my classic hybrid reading and continuously sought self-worth	
	For classic hybrid reading, my choices are based on my true interests and values, and I feel satisfied	

Variable	Sample Item	Source
	For classic hybrid reading, I freely read in my preferred way, and I feel satisfied	
	For classic hybrid reading, I believe I have certain abilities and continue to improve, and I am satisfied with myself	
	Through classic hybrid reading, I communicate and connect with others, generating intellectual collisions and resonance, which satisfies me	
	My classic hybrid reading is my ideal reading mode, which satisfies me	

3.2 Data Collection

Before formal questionnaire distribution, this study conducted a pre-survey with a sample of 50 people, modifying the questionnaire structure and design of some items based on the results. The formal survey was administered via the “Wenjuanxing” platform from June 10, 2023, to June 25, 2024, inviting readers to complete electronic questionnaires. A total of 387 questionnaires were collected. After screening out questionnaires with mismatched birth years, no classic reading experience, preference for only paper reading, overly short completion time (less than 90 seconds), or uniform answers, 351 valid questionnaires were obtained, yielding a 90.6% validity rate. The sample comprised 179 male readers (50%) and 172 female readers (50%). By education level, there were 2 junior high school or below (0.6%), 37 senior high school (including technical secondary school) (10.5%), 98 junior college (27.9%), 123 undergraduate (35.1%), 67 master’s (19.1%), and 24 doctoral students (6.8%). Regarding classic reading duration, 117 readers (33.3%) had 6 months to 3 years, 110 (31.4%) had 3-5 years, and 124 (35.3%) had over 5 years. Among Generation Z readers, 164 (46.7%) preferred digital hybrid reading, while 187 (53.3%) preferred combining paper and digital reading.

3.3 Reliability and Validity Tests

This study used SPSS 26.0 and AMOS 26.0 for reliability and validity testing. For reliability, Cronbach’s α and composite reliability (CR) values were examined for all variables. The overall Cronbach’s α coefficient was 0.921, with all variables’ Cronbach’s α and CR values exceeding 0.7, indicating good internal consistency and high reliability. For validity, confirmatory factor analysis was

used to test convergent and discriminant validity. Results showed all variables' AVE values exceeded 0.5, with $X^2/df = 1.450 < 3$, $CFI = 0.961 > 0.9$, $GFI = 0.894 > 0.8$ (acceptable), $TLI = 0.955 > 0.9$, $IFI = 0.961 > 0.9$, and $RMSEA = 0.036 < 0.08$, indicating overall good model fit.

3.4 Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis describes the closeness of relationships between variables. Correlation tests were used to determine relationships among variables, providing preliminary evidence for model scientific rationality and laying a foundation for subsequent data analysis. Significant correlations among all variables in this study are shown in Table 4 .

Table 4 Correlation Analysis of Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Security Needs	1								
2. Belongingness & Love Needs	.359**	1							
3. Esteem Needs	.250**	.322**	1						
4. Cognitive Needs	.361**	.353**	.347**	1					
5. Aesthetic Needs	.375**	.363**	.417**	.392**	1				
6. Self-Actualization Needs	.358**	.385**	.405**	.396**	.320**	1			
7. Variety-Seeking Behavior	.335**	.357**	.338**	.392**	.273**	.347**	1		
8. Perceived Value	.348**	.331**	.371**	.332**	.332**	.351**	.368**	1	
9. Reader Satisfaction	.362**	.389**	.379**	.341**	.310**	.314**	.366**	.338**	1

Note: ** Significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

3.5 Model Hypothesis Testing

To verify hypothesized relationships, this study used AMOS 26.0 for structural equation modeling analysis. Model paths and hypothesis testing results are shown in Figure 4 [Figure 4: see original paper] and Table 5 . Results indicate

that security needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, cognitive needs, aesthetic needs, and self-actualization needs positively influence Generation Z's variety-seeking behavior in classic hybrid reading; variety-seeking behavior significantly and positively influences perceived value and reader satisfaction; perceived value and reader satisfaction are significantly positively correlated. All paths are significant at $P < 0.05$, confirming initial hypotheses H1-H9.

Figure 4 Structural Equation Model Path Coefficients

Table 5 Hypothesis Testing Results

Path	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Result
Security Needs → Variety-Seeking Behavior	0.179	0.080	2.229	0.027*	Supported
Belongingness & Love Needs → Variety-Seeking Behavior	0.159	0.078	2.047	0.043*	Supported
Esteem Needs → Variety-Seeking Behavior	0.203	0.072	2.823	0.005**	Supported
Cognitive Needs → Variety-Seeking Behavior	0.146	0.067	2.188	0.028*	Supported
Aesthetic Needs → Variety-Seeking Behavior	0.155	0.073	2.128	0.034*	Supported
Self-Actualization Needs → Variety-Seeking Behavior	0.152	0.070	2.165	0.030*	Supported

Path	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Result
Variety-Seeking Behavior → Reader Satisfaction	0.384	0.124	3.095	0.002**	Supported
Variety-Seeking Behavior → Perceived Value	0.424	0.112	3.786	***	Supported
Perceived Value → Reader Satisfaction	0.206	0.078	2.641	0.008**	Supported

Note: * $P < 0.05$; ** $P < 0.01$; *** $P < 0.001$.

4.1 Influence of Autonomous Needs

Security needs belong to autonomous needs in Maslow's hierarchy, representing priority needs after physiological needs. Security needs positively influence Generation Z readers' variety-seeking behavior, with a path coefficient of 0.179 ($P < 0.05$). In the security needs dimension, Generation Z demonstrates significant concern for autonomous control and self-determination, with strong independent consciousness and self-protection awareness. As A8 stated: "If only one reading channel remains, I would feel a sense of loss, deprivation, and insecurity, perhaps due to uncertainty about the future and fear of missing out." A14 noted: "I value self-choice in the digital information environment and engage in proactive hybrid reading, which allows me to explore and learn more freely." Evidently, variety-seeking behavior has become Generation Z's lifestyle and psychological security protection mechanism [54]. Rich, stable, and orderly information channels, along with subjective control and flexible freedom, can alleviate anxiety and unease for Generation Z. Growing up in an era of solid material foundations, Generation Z has enjoyed greater autonomy since childhood.

4.2 Influence of Relational Needs

Relational needs include belongingness and love needs and esteem needs. Both belongingness and love needs and esteem needs positively influence Generation Z readers' variety-seeking behavior, with path coefficients of 0.159 and 0.203,

respectively ($P < 0.05$). Generation Z' s digital lifestyle determines their preference for online social interaction while also enjoying offline engagement. Digital media development has facilitated large-scale social reading, helping Generation Z readers break traditional reading social limitations and enabling intellectual collisions and knowledge interactions through personalized, variety-seeking behaviors in hybrid reading. As A1 shared: "I often share my reading reflections in comment sections, exchanging comments and likes with other readers." A10 stated: "Sometimes I deliberately pause to watch bullet comments; some are quite talented, and the interaction makes me feel the beauty of reading." In Generation Z' s reading socialization, interest-based social interaction runs throughout. This group yearns to construct relationships enabling spiritual upliftment and emotional companionship, desiring a "close-knit," "immersive," and "decentralized" circle of friends where "common topics," "interests," and "group atmosphere" become key motivators for reading variety-seeking behavior. As A12 noted: "We conduct professional group meetings via WeChat groups to discuss professional classics, gaining others' knowledge while expressing our own insights, which gives some sense of achievement." A14 shared: "I don' t feel like a lonely reader but rather someone connected with a group of people with similar thoughts and feelings; this sense of connection is warm." Generation Z considers belongingness, love, esteem, and self-actualization needs as developmental needs [55]. Hybrid reading builds channels for recognition expression and interactive learning. Reading socialization compensates for insufficient recognition and achievement in reality, satisfying their emotional needs for loving and being loved, respecting and being respected.

4.3 Influence of Competence Needs

Cognitive needs, aesthetic needs, and self-actualization needs collectively constitute competence needs, all positively influencing Generation Z readers' variety-seeking behavior, with path coefficients of 0.146, 0.155, and 0.152, respectively ($P < 0.05$). Multiple respondents mentioned that hybrid reading maximizes the use of fragmented time; variety-seeking behavior toward classic content helps them better understand, imagine, and comprehend paper originals, maximizing knowledge absorption and mental enlightenment. As A18 stated: "Video explanations are often detailed with charts and animations, making it easier for me to understand complex medical concepts." A14 noted: "Previously, reading only meant understanding plotlines, but now I can also learn about historical backgrounds and authors' biographies through media materials, giving me deeper insights into classic works." Generation Z dislikes seriousness, emphasizes entertainment spirit and interest-driven searching, centers emotional value as the behavioral axis, focuses on subjective well-being and psychological pleasure, and pays extreme attention to sensory experiences [56]; they value aesthetics, pursuing aesthetic alignment in information selection, believing that "aesthetics is the standard" and "preference is king," making aesthetics one of their primary satisfaction criteria [57]. As A13 shared: "Composite sensory experiences may be more appealing; I don' t have to overly rely on my imagination. Stories pre-

sented visually or aurally, contrasting with previous imagination, are also very moving.” A17 stated: “I choose TV dramas, variety shows, and other composite channels to access classics because they allow me to learn in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere.” A8 noted: “I find those poems and songs beautiful when combined with lighting, visuals, and background music.” A10 added: “Strong visual impact attracts me to keep reading.” As a generation that loves innovation, dares to speak and act, and pursues coolness, Generation Z refuses to be supporting characters or social marginal figures, advocating self-actualization. Reflecting on classic hybrid reading, Generation Z has strong desires for self-construction and value output, considering self-cognition, self-expression, and self-transcendence as important ways to achieve self-actualization. As A6 stated: “Reading is a form of self-cultivation; through reading, I become more aware of my growth and recognize my gains.” A4 noted: “Through hybrid reading, I developed interests in different fields, making myself more knowledgeable and talented.” Variety-seeking behavior enables Generation Z readers who are traditionally considered “non-readers” to enjoy reading in hybrid reading by obtaining diverse need satisfactions.

4.4 Relationship Among Variety-Seeking Behavior, Perceived Value, and Reader Satisfaction

Generation Z’ s variety-seeking behavior in classic hybrid reading significantly and positively influences reader satisfaction, with a path coefficient of 0.384 ($P < 0.001$). Generation Z’ s variety-seeking behavior is significantly positively correlated with perceived value (path coefficient = 0.424, $P < 0.001$). Generation Z’ s perceived value is also significantly positively correlated with reader satisfaction (path coefficient = 0.206, $P < 0.01$). These results align with previous research conclusions. One reason for variety-seeking behavior is that behavioral subjects need to satisfy information stimulation [58], increasing satisfaction with perceived stimulation levels. Perceived value is a core factor determining user satisfaction, with significant mediating effects.

Classics are the “source of living water” for cultural innovation. Generation Z represents the backbone of current digital reading and the most important future consumer growth force. As nationwide reading initiatives continue advancing, research on Generation Z’ s classic hybrid reading holds positive significance. This study focused on Generation Z’ s classic hybrid reading, employed mixed-methods research based on needs hierarchy theory, constructed a “Needs-Satisfaction” model, and confirmed that—given physiological needs are satisfied—security needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, cognitive needs, aesthetic needs, and self-actualization needs significantly and positively influence Generation Z’ s variety-seeking behavior in classic hybrid reading. Additionally, variety-seeking behavior and perceived value mediate the relationship between Generation Z’ s reading needs and reader satisfaction, enriching theoretical research in reading psychology and reading communication.

To promote Generation Z’ s hybrid reading promotion and classic works dis-

semination, this study proposes three valuable practical strategies: technology empowerment, interaction energization, and self-enablement.

(1) Technology Empowerment. With the rapid development of digital technology, reading experiences are shifting from traditional text modes to full-sensory immersive experiences. While adhering to “content is king,” we should explore cutting-edge technological methods to empower Generation Z’ s variety-seeking behavior in classic reading. For example, introduce generative AI technology to launch AI short video series, using deep learning models for dynamic visual reproduction of classic scenes, or generating personalized plot rewrites, background story extensions, or visual materials based on classics. Generate new scenes or character interaction content according to readers’ interests. Combine blockchain technology to create an immutable reading contribution record system, enabling readers to gain recognition and rewards when sharing classic content. Create Mixed Reality classic learning platforms where tagging technology integrates classic content with readers’ daily life scenes, improving classic knowledge acquisition ability by scanning environmental objects to align with Generation Z’ s mobile learning habits.

In resource construction, dynamic adaptive content technology can be adopted to adjust recommended content and display forms in real-time based on reader behavioral data. For users with short, concentrated reading sessions, provide quick navigation and keyword extraction functions for multimedia content; for deep-reading users, provide detailed annotations, background expansions, and in-depth analysis support to comprehensively enhance the digital appeal of classic content.

(2) Interaction Energization. “Media is a game tool” [59]. Interaction design should transcend traditional social functions to provide Generation Z readers with an entertaining and deeply engaging reading experience. Specifically, introduce a virtual reality-based “Classic Reading Immersive Theater” in classic reading platforms, allowing readers to participate in classic works’ plot development from character perspectives. For example, readers could “enter” *Les Misérables* to dialogue with Jean Valjean or conduct interactive discussions in *The Analects* settings. Develop intelligent tutoring systems using large language models to provide real-time interpretation, question answering, and personalized recommendations, creating a “virtual classic scholar” companion learning experience. Additionally, design classic reading community systems where readers can accumulate digital identities through reading behaviors, obtaining virtual “academy levels” or specific “domain certifications” to increase participation belongingness and achievement. Readers are no longer merely content recipients but participants and disseminators, diversely and deeply integrating into the classic culture dissemination network.

(3) Self-Enablement. Self-enablement emphasizes readers’ self-learning, self-challenge, and self-transcendence to enhance abilities and stimulate potential. For classic works to gain contemporary attention, their cultural connotations, aesthetic implications, and artistic experiences must engage in spiritual ex-

change, ideological communication, and aesthetic dialogue with readers. Generation Z readers possess strong self-expression and self-actualization consciousness. Reading promotion should focus on stimulating their intrinsic motivation through innovative forms, encouraging them to conduct classic reading and reinterpretation creation. For instance, introduce dynamic content generated by generative AI during interactions to generate real-time interactive questions, synthesize reader-contributed content, or transform readers' questions into discussion topics through natural language processing technology, encouraging active output. Use AI to analyze reader creation data, such as reading reflections, illustration designs, or short video adaptations, providing content optimization suggestions or even achieving a "AI-reader co-creation" classic reinterpretation process through content regeneration tools, helping readers participate in deep creation. Technology-driven personalized creative support not only satisfies Generation Z readers' self-expression needs but also encourages their sustained attention to the long-term development of classic hybrid reading, generating more lasting spiritual resonance.

This study has certain limitations. First, the number of interviewees and survey respondents covering Generation Z is limited. Second, the study did not fully consider external factors such as sample social and cultural backgrounds and family environments. Third, the practical effects of specific technology applications in the technology empowerment strategy remain to be verified, such as the actual utility of generative AI in classic reading promotion requiring further evaluation. Future research on related themes could expand to include multiple data sources beyond behavioral data to enhance result robustness, incorporate moderating effects of external factors like family environment, and explore deep integration of technology and culture to promote the inheritance and innovation of excellent traditional Chinese culture through classic reading and drive high-quality development of nationwide reading in the digital era.

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