



The Influence of Digital Media on Teenager's Reading Habits

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Abstract. Since technology is developing quite fast nowadays, discussions about the effects of digital media on the young generation are getting more and more popular. In this paper, the author studies the influence of digital media on teenagers' reading habits because reading is quite important as teenagers grow. The first part of this paper focused on the negative influence of teenagers using digital media like e-books and online videos as reading materials. Three ideas are mainly illustrated, for instance, young people are getting less patient and concentrated on reading long paragraphs because of the vivid ways expressing on social media. Besides, online summaries about the content of the books make teenagers feel unnecessary to read paper books. However, some positive effects of teenagers using digital media do exist and they are discussed in the second part. After comparing the arguments from different researchers, a conclusion can be drawn. There is no denying that browsing online can obtain more information and improve efficiency, but on the other hand, some unhealthy habits of reading can be formed when teenagers use digital media.

Keywords: E-books · Reading habits · Teenagers · Advantages · Drawbacks

1 Introduction

Social media becomes an important part of young people's lives nowadays. It plays an important role in all walks of life and changes teenagers' ways of receiving information and even their reading habits. A large amount of research has been done about these changes. In the paper of Juran Krishna Sarkhel and Piyali Das, it is found that the varied ways of getting information from social media make people spend more time reading online every day, and some digital distractions, such as news updates and advertisement, also extend the time spent on social media [1]. As e-books and social media get popular among young people, there are some discussions about their impact on young people's reading habits. Sally Maynard pointed out that e-books combine the feature of paper books and computers. Some animation and sounds of a narrator can be added to the text of an e-book in order to attract more teenagers to read and help them form good habits [2]. Another author Ziming Liu researched the reading behaviour of teenagers, and he considered that reading online has several advantages. For instance, it can inspire the reading range of teenagers and provide abundant information. However, he also argued

that the increased time spent on social media, such as television and the internet, leads to a fall in the willingness of teenagers to read books [3]. This paper focuses on both the positive and negative impacts of digital media on the reading habits of teenagers based on a case study of Kindle, giving a clear summary of the influence of digital media on teenagers' reading habits.

2 Negative Effects of Digital Media on Teenagers' Reading Habits

There are a lot of arguments about the disadvantages of teenagers using digital media. Young people have plenty of ways to search online due to the fast development and popularity of the internet. Many multimedia platforms provide vivid ways to display information. In the investigation of Sarkhel and Das, a digital system is the basic infrastructure in families which are in the middle-income level in Indian society. The equipment which contains a television, a music system, and video games becomes an indispensable part of people's daily life. Especially, young people's attention can be easily attracted by the fresh and colourful interfaces [1]. Johnson observed that even people who are keen on reading are spending more time on digital media, reading in various formats [4]. Hence, young generations can be affected even from when they were born, and the decreasing tendency of reading printed books is probably one of the results of teenagers' increasing usage of the Internet.

When people browse online, the content can be linked with many other related sources, and the massive relation leads to a serious distraction for young people. "The possibility of linking electronic texts to anything and everything was enticing, and Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) texts proliferated" [1]. The increasing text information, pictures, and videos on the Internet make people find it quite comprehensive to learn something, and hypertext acts as a role that collects all these attractive elements into one passage of words. According to the ideas of Liu, on the one hand, hyper-reading such as skimming and jumping from one webpage to another has the probability to affect the sustained attention of readers [3]. On the other hand, paper books can only provide wordy narration, therefore, readers are likely to feel bored to understand a great number of characters and lose the patience to keep reading. In this context, more dispersed reading is applied since page-makers are competing with each other in order to increase the click rate of their own work. Liu concluded that the network environment promotes people to keep expanding their knowledge storage. However, internet users are always distracted by hyperlinks and they no longer pursue in-depth understanding and thinking of things, which means readers lose interest in reading books that only describe one specific subject. If the situation continues, it will be difficult for them to entirely finish reading even one book.

In many social media platforms, such as Instagram and Twitter, posts and news always occur in a short and brief form in order to grab people's attention. Therefore, the young generation is used to reading a small number of fragments. They find it much more interesting and easier to get information by glancing over the internet pages rather than reading books with a lot of descriptive words. Teenagers become less concentrated on reading long articles in paper books, which blocks them to form good reading habits in the period they need to learn and read a lot. Owusu-Acheaw pointed out that searching

and getting information online will lose the true value of reading. And he also observed that many readers get fewer opportunities to read deeply in an environment filled with hypertext [5].

In the internet environment, it is quite easy to acquire a summary and some comments about the contents of a book if people search in browsers. There is nothing wrong to learn about the topic of the books before reading, but, usually, teenagers cannot appropriately balance the extent of learning from the summary and by reading books themselves. What could happen is that they prefer to scan around pages with pictures and watch videos introducing the book. After getting a rough idea of the books they are interested in, young people will consider that although they do not read the book in paper version, the content has already been shown clearly in a much more convenient and entertaining approach to them. Liu described the reading statement of the young participants, some of whom realised that they have less patience with reading long documents, since they have already formed the habit of scanning the paragraph in the front rapidly and selecting the keywords about the whole context instead of reading word by word carefully. It is too hard to read intensively from the introduction to the last page of a book [3]. In this way, they choose the book through the information obtained from the keywords. As a result, books and long articles seem to be useless and young people believe that it is unnecessary to spend a long period of time and much energy reading them.

These phenomena cannot be ignored. They not only affect the current reading habits of teenagers but also people's life of the future.

3 Positive Effects of Digital Media on Teenagers' Reading Habits

Digital media have some benefits for the form of the reading habits of the youth as well since the purpose of the development of science and technology is mainly to provide convenience for people. Social media shows lots of extended information that children cannot learn from books to inspire their reading range. The information from electronic libraries can now be accessed and browsed by a potential user while he or she is at home using a terminal. Similarly, frequent exposure to the information pushed by the server may encourage and strengthen the user's reading habits. Regular orientation and training in the usage and management of information and database networks may pique users' interest and lead them to further reading. The modern digital world in general and the Internet will have a significant impact on how readers value reading and their reading habits [1].

With the advent of the Internet, the range of reading materials has been significantly expanded to websites, web pages, electronic books, journals, papers, emails, discussion forums, chats, instant messaging, blogs, wikis, and other multimedia publications. Readers can now use their personal computers to view and explore the online content from the entire web [6]. After collecting news and videos from sources all over the world, multimedia platforms will give users some content related to the topics they normally view. Thus, teenagers can explore deeply about their interests through the Internet. The Internet can help teenagers get interested in studying when they are learning to read by using digital products. Animated visuals and vibrant 3D images in short stories frequently keep children's attention longer than books do. For individuals who are interested in learning,

the Internet does provide a plethora of knowledge. Additionally, a lot of periodicals that were published weekly or monthly in print are updated considerably more regularly online. Periodical websites provide more up-to-date information than their printed counterparts. Online newsletters and blogs broaden the range of free information available [1].

Another advantage of teenagers using digital media to read is that digital media always help teenagers save time to select books that are attractive to them. People enjoy browsing and making accidental discoveries. On the one hand, Nunberg adds that perusing a document database will never be quite as enlightening as browsing a bookstore or library stacks tough [3]. On the other hand, people cannot discover and preliminary understand the contents of paper books they never know until they see the physical objects in bookstores, but electrical documents can be obtained easily on the Internet without any costs. Therefore, young people are likely to watch and search for some relative introduction and other basic information on the Internet about the books they are going to read. Then, they can tell whether the book is interesting and worth reading or not.

Instead of wasting time reading a book to find out if it fits individuals' interests, teenagers can quickly and accurately find what is right for them. According to one study by Leff and Harper, students said that their lack of time was the primary obstacle to reading. In light of these findings, students prefer reading information that is easily accessible on the Internet to doing a time-consuming library search [7]. The main driver of this transition is the expansion of the Internet, which serves as the foundation for the digitization of printed materials for both educational and promotional purposes. Therefore, the Internet is heavily used by younger people since it is more convenient, cost-effective, and time-saving [5].

4 A Case Study of Kindle

In 2012, for the first time, the proportion of respondents to the National Literacy Trust's annual literacy survey reporting reading on screen outside school outnumbered those reading in print.

From Fig. 1, it can be seen that, compared to other electronic devices, such as phones, tablets, and computers, e-readers account for the largest proportion of children reading in electronic devices.

Taking Kindle, an e-reader designed and sold by Amazon, as an example, users can buy, download, and read e-books, newspapers, magazines, blogs, and other electronic media over a wireless network using the Kindle. As a new variety of the reading tool, the e-reader Kindle has been popular among the young generation since 2007, however, different opinions are held about its impacts on teenagers' reading habits.

Some people find that e-readers like Kindle give them the opportunity to distract because of the vivid ways to receive all sorts of information. According to 16% of students and 24% of professors who responded to the poll, reading from electronic books is challenging, uncomfortable, inconvenient, exhausting, slow, and deters attention [7].

While the other point of view on the use of Kindle is optimistic. In addition to text search tools and printing functions, the majority of respondents—82% of students



Fig. 1. Proportion of children reading in print and on electronic devices (Source: National Literacy Trust's annual literacy survey 2012; N = 34,910) [8].

and 87% of faculty—cited the ability to download materials to personal devices as the most significant benefit of digital resources. Some users believe that e-books can be highlighted and used to search for useful information with high efficiency. Without damaging the book, they could simply make marks and save pages that might aid them in their projects. It would be good to have access to books on the Kindle because the young generation could search for keywords instead of leafing through a book and hoping for the best [9]. It seems to be a good consequence of their reading habits while using e-readers.

Then, in Zhu's research, he studied the impact of Kindle and paper books on senior high school students' reading ability improvement. He found that both Kindle and paper books can help improve students' reading ability. In other words, e-readers and paper books have no obvious differences in enhancing students' reading ability. Using e-readers to read has an effect similar to reading paper books [10].

5 Conclusion

All in all, there are many arguments supporting the positive side of teenagers using digital media to read. It cannot be denied that e-books help teenagers a lot in expanding their reading range of books and scope of knowledge. Moreover, easy to carry and free to mark are the advantages of e-books when young people read. However, things on the Internet are fresh and complex, which is very attractive to teenagers. They are easily distracted or impatient with words in books if they lack self-control. Thus, they are likely to form bad reading habits. At the same time, it cannot be ruled out that teenagers refuse to read the original book in its entirety after reading the condensed version of the introduction on the Internet. It makes them form the habit of not reading carefully, and these bad effects must be taken seriously.

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